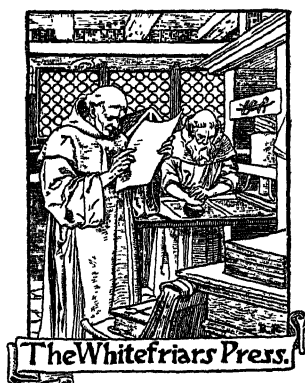

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“Ask

Mamma”



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“ASK

MAMMA”

OR THE

Richest Commoner in England

Illustrated

With 13 Hand-Coloured Engravings

and many Woodcuts by

JOHN LEECH

VOLUME I

London

Bradbury, Agnew, & Co. Ltd., Bouverie Street

ASK MAMA

or
THE RICHEST COMMONER
IN
ENGLAND

By The Author of
"Handley Crofts" "Sponge's
Sporting Tour" &c, &c,



with illustrations
by John Leech

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD.,
PRINTERS,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

■

TO THE
HONOURABLE MRS. COVENTRY

ONE OF THE BEST OF MAMMAS

This Volume is Inscribed

BY HER

OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

THE AUTHOR

■

PREFACE.

IT may be a recommendation to the lover of light literature to be told, that the following story does not involve the complication of a plot. It is a mere continuous narrative of an almost every-day exaggeration, interspersed with sporting scenes and excellent illustrations by LEECH.

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“ASK MAMMA.”

CHAPTER I.

OUR HERO AND CO



Our Hero and Co.

CONSIDERING that Billy Pringle, or Fine Billy, as his good-natured friends called him, was only an under-bred chap, he was as good an imitation of a Swell as ever we saw. He had all the airy dreaminess of an hereditary

highflyer, while his big talk and off-hand manner strengthened the delusion.

It was only when you came to close quarters with him, and found that though he talked in pounds he acted in pence, and marked his fine dictionary words and laboured expletives, that you came to the conclusion that he was “painfully gentlemanly.” So few people, however, agree upon what a gentleman is, that

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Billy was well calculated to pass muster with the million. Fine shirts, fine ties, fine talk, fine trinkets, go a long way towards furnishing the character with many. Billy was liberal, not to say prodigal, in all these. The only infallible rule we know is, that the man who is always talking about being a gentleman never is one. Just as the man who is always talking about honour, morality, fine feeling, and so on, never knows anything of these qualities but the name.

Nature had favoured Billy's pretensions in the lady-killing way. In person he was above the middle height, five feet eleven or so, slim and well-proportioned, with a finely-shaped head and face, fair complexion, light brown hair, laughing blue eyes, with long lashes, good eyebrows, regular pearly teeth and delicately pencilled moustache. Whiskers he did not aspire to. Nor did Billy abuse the gifts of Nature by disguising himself in any of the vulgar gloomy-gamekeepery styles of dress that so effectually reduce all mankind to the level of the labourer, nor adopt any of the "loud" patterns that have lately figured so conspicuously in our streets. On the contrary, he studied the quiet unobtrusive order of costume, and the harmony of colours, with a view of producing a perfectly elegant general effect. Neatly-fitting frock or dress coats, instead of baggy sacks with trowser legs for sleeves, quiet-patterned vests and equally quiet-patterned trowsers. If he could only have been easy in them he would have done extremely well, but there was always a nervous twitching, and jerking, and feeling, as if he was wondering what people were thinking or saying of him. In the dress department he was ably assisted by his mother, a lady of very considerable taste, who not only fashioned his clothes but his mind, indeed we might add his person, Billy having taken after her, as they say; for his father, though an excellent man and warm, was rather of the suet-dumpling order of architecture, short, thick, and round, with a neck that was rather difficult to find.

His name, too, was William, and some, the good-natured ones again of course, used to say that he might have been called "Fine Billy the first," for under the auspices of his elegant

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wife he had assumed a certain indifference to trade; and when in the grand strut at Ramsgate or Broadstairs, or any of his watering-places, if appealed to about any of the things made or dealt in by any of the concerns in which he was a "Co.," he used to raise his brows and shrug his shoulders, and say with a very deprecatory sort of air, "'Pon my life, I should say you're right," or "'Deed I should say it was so," just as if he was one of the other Pringles—the Pringles who have nothing to do with trade—and in noways connected with Pringle & Co.; Pringle & Potts; Smith, Sharp & Pringle; or any of the firms that the Pringles carried on under the titles of the original founders. He was neither a tradesman nor a gentleman. The Pringles—like the happy united family we meet upon wheels; the dove nestling with the gorged cat, and so on—all pulled well together when there was a common victim to plunder; and kept their hands in by what they called taking fair advantages of each other, that is to say, cheating each other, when there was not.

Nobody knew the ins and outs of the Pringles. If they let their own right hands know what their left hands did, they took care not to let anybody else's right hand know. In multiplicity of concerns they rivalled that great man "Co.," who the country lad coming to London said seemed to be in partnership with almost everybody. The author of "Who's Who?" would be puzzled to post people who are Brown in one place, Jones in a second, and Robinson in a third. Still the Pringles were "a most respectable family," mercantile morality being too often mere matter of moonshine. The only member of the family who was not exactly "legally honest"—legal honesty being much more elastic than common honesty—was cunning Jerry, who thought to cover by his piety the omissions of his practice.

He was a fawning, sanctified, smooth-spoken, plausible, plump little man, who seemed to be swelling with the milk of human kindness, anxious only to pour it out upon some deserving object. His manner was so frank and bland, and his front face smile so sweet, that it was cruel of his side one to contradict

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the impresssion and show the cunning duplicity of his nature. Still he smirked and smiled, and "bless-you-dear" and "hope-you're-happy-dear"ed the women, that, being a bachelor, they all thought it best to put up with his "mistakes," as he called his peculations, and sought his favour by frequent visits with appropriate presents to his elegant villa at Peckham Rye. Here he passed for quite a model man; twice to church every Sunday, and to the lecture in the evening, and would not profane the sanctity of the day by having a hot potato to eat with his cold meat. He was a ripe rogue, and had been jointly or severally, as the lawyers say, in a good many little transactions that would not exactly bear inspection; and these "mistakes" not tallying with the sanctified character he assumed, he had been obliged to wriggle out of them as best he could, with the loss of as few feathers as possible.

At first, of course, he always tried the humbugging system, at which he was a great adept; that failing, he had recourse to bullying, at which he was not bad, declaring that the party complaining was an ill-natured, ill-conditioned, quarrelsome fellow, who merely wanted a peg to hang a grievance upon, and that Jerry, so far from defrauding him, had been the best friend he ever had in his life, and that he would put him through every court in the kingdom before he would be imposed upon by him. If neither of these answered, and Jerry found himself pinned in a corner, he feigned madness, when his solicitor, Mr. Supple, appeared, and by dint of legal threats, and declaring that if the unmerited persecution was persisted in, it would infallibly consign his too sensitive client to a lunatic asylum, he generally contrived to get Jerry out of the scrape by some means or other best known to themselves. Then Jerry, of course, being clear, would innuendo his own version of the story as dexterously as he could, always taking care to avoid a collision with the party, but more than insinuating that he (Jerry) had been infamously used, and his well known love of peace and quietness taken advantage of; and though men of the world generally suspect the party who is most anxious to propagate his story to be in the wrong, yet

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their number is but small compared to those who believe anything they are told, and who cannot put "that and that" together for themselves.

So Jerry went on robbing and praying and passing for a very proper man. Some called him "cunning Jerry," to distinguish him from an uncle who was Jerry also; but as this name would not do for the family to adopt, he was generally designated by them as "Want-nothin'-but-what's-right Jerry," that being the form of words with which he generally prefaced his extortions. In the same way they distinguished between a fat Joe and a thin one, calling the thin one merely "Joe," and the fat one "Joe who can't get within half a yard of the table;" and between two clerks, each bearing the not uncommon name of Smith, one being called Smith, the other "Head-and-shoulders Smith"—the latter, of course, taking his title from his figure.

With this outline of the Pringle family, we will proceed to draw out such of its members as figure more conspicuously in our story.

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CHAPTER II.

A SLEEPING PARTNER



WITH Mrs. William Pringle's (*née* Willing) birth, parentage, and education, we would gladly furnish the readers of this work with some information, but, unfortunately it does not lie in our power so to do, for the simple reason that we do not know anything. We first find her located at that eminent court milliner and dressmaker's, Madame Adelaide Banboxeney, in Furbelow Street, Berkeley Square, where her elegant manners, and obliging disposition, to say nothing of her taste in torturing ribbons and wreaths, and her talent for making plain girls into pretty ones, earned for her a very distinguished reputation. She soon became first-hand, or trier-on, and, unfortunately, was afterwards tempted into setting-up for herself, when she soon found that, though fine ladies like to be cheated, it must be done in style, and by some one, if not with a carriage, at all events with a name; and that a bonnet, though beautiful in Bond Street, loses all power of attraction if it is known to come out of Bloomsbury.

Miss Willing was, therefore, soon sold up; and Madame Banboxeney (whose real name was Brown, Jane Brown, wife of John Brown, who was a billiard-table marker, until his wife's fingers set him up in a gig), Madame Banboxeney, we say, thinking to profit by Miss Willing's misfortunes, offered her a very reduced salary to return to her situation; but Miss Willing having tasted the sweets of bed, a thing she very seldom did at Madame Banboxeney's, at least not during the

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season, stood out for more money ; the consequence of which was, she lost that chance, and had the benefit of Madame's bad word at all the other establishments she afterwards applied to. In this dilemma, she resolved to turn her hand to lady's maid-ism ; and having mastered the science of hair-dressing, she made the rounds of the accustomed servant-shops, grocers, oilmen, brushmen, and so on, asking if they knew of any one wanting a perfect lady's-maid.

As usual in almost all the affairs of life, the first attempt was a failure. She got into what she thoroughly despised, an untitled family, where she had a great deal more to do than she liked, and was grossly "put upon" both by the master and missis. She gave the place up, because, as she said, "the master would come into the missis's room with nothing but his night-shirt and spectacles on," but, in reality, because the missis had some of her things made up for the children instead of passing them on, as of right they ought to have been, to her. She deeply regretted ever having demeaned herself by taking such a situation.

Being thus out of place, and finding the many applications she made for other situations, when she gave a reference to her former one, always resulted in the ladies declining her services, sometimes on the plea of being already suited, or of another "young person" having applied just before her, or of her being too young (they never said too pretty, though one elderly lady on seeing her shook her head, and said she "had sons") ; and, being tired of living on old tea leaves, Miss Willing resolved to sink her former place, and advertise as if she had just left Madame Banboxeney's. Accordingly, she drew out a very specious advertisement, headed "TO THE NOBILITY," offering the services of a lady's-maid, who thoroughly understood millinery, dress-making, hair-dressing, and getting up fine linen, with an address to a cheese shop, and made an arrangement to give Madame Banboxeney a lift with a heavy wedding order she was busy upon, if she would recommend her as just fresh from her establishment.

This advertisement produced a goodly crop of letters, and

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Miss Willing presently closed with the Honourable Mrs. Cavesson, whose husband was a good deal connected with the turf, enjoying that certain road to ruin which so many have pursued; and it says much for Miss Willing's acuteness, that though she entered Mrs. Cavesson's service late in the day, when all the preliminaries for a smash had been perfected, her fine sensibilities and discrimination enabled her to anticipate the coming evil, and to deposit her mistress's jewellery in a place of safety three quarters of an hour before the bailiffs entered.

This act of fidelity greatly enhanced her reputation, and as it was well known that "poor dear Mrs. Cavesson" would not be able to keep her, there were several great candidates for this "treasure of a maid." Miss Willing had now nothing to do but pick and choose; and, after some consideration, she selected what she called a high quality family, one where there was a regular assessed tax-paper establishment of servants, where the butler sold his lord's wine-custom to the highest bidder, and the heads of all the departments received their "reglars" upon the tradesmen's bills; the lady never demeaning herself by wearing the same gloves or ball-shoes twice, or propitiating the nurse by presents of raiment that was undoubtedly hers—we mean the maid's. She was a real lady, in the proper acceptation of the term.

This was the beautiful, and then newly married, Countess Delacey, whose exquisite garniture will still live in the recollection of many of the now bald-headed beaux of that period. For these delightful successes the countess was mainly indebted to our hero's mother, Miss Willing, whose suggestive genius oft came to the aid of the perplexed and exhausted milliner. It was to the service of the Countess Delacey that Miss Willing was indebted for becoming the wife of Mr. Pringle, afterwards "Fine Billy the first"—an event that deserves to be introduced in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROAD.



It was on a cold, damp, raw December morning, before the emancipating civilisation of railways, that our hero's father, then returning from a trading tour, after stamping up and down the damp flags before the Lion and Unicorn hotel and posting-house at Slopper-ton, waiting for the old True Blue Independent coach "comin' hup," for whose cramped inside he had booked a preference seat, at length found himself bundled into the straw-bottomed vehicle, to a very different companion to what he was accustomed to meet in these deplorable conveyances. Instead of a fusty old farmer, or a crumby basket-encumbered market-woman, he found himself opposite a smiling, radiant young lady, whose elegant dress and ring-bedizened hand proclaimed, as indeed was then generally the case with ladies, that she was travelling in a coach "for the first time in her life."

This was our fair friend, Miss Willing.

The Earl and Countess Delacey had just received an invitation to spend the Christmas at Tiara Castle, where the countess on the previous year had received if not a defeat, at all events had not achieved a triumph, in the dressing way, over the Countess of Honiton, whose maid, Miss Criblace, though now bribed to secrecy with a full set of very little the worse for wear Chinchilla fur, had kept the fur and told the secret to Miss Willing, that their ladyships were to meet again. Miss Willing was now on her way to town, to arrange with the countess's milliner for an annihilating series of morning and evening dresses wherewith to

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extinguish Lady Honiton, it being utterly impossible, as our fair friends will avouch, for any lady to appear twice in the same attire. How thankful men ought to be that the same rule does not prevail with them!

Miss Willing was extremely well got up; for being of nearly the same size as the countess, her ladyship's slightly-worn things passed on to her with scarcely a perceptible diminution of freshness, it being remarkable how, in even third and fourth-rate establishments, dresses that were not fit for the "missis" to be seen in come out quite new and smart on the maid.

On this occasion Miss Willing ran entirely to the dark colours, just such as a lady travelling in her own carriage might be expected to wear. A black terry velvet bonnet with a single ostrich feather, a dark brown Levantine silk dress, with rich sable cuffs, muff, and boa, and a pair of well-fitting primrose-coloured kid gloves, which if they ever had been on before had not suffered by the act.

Billy—old Billy that is to say—was quite struck in a heap at such an unwonted apparition, and after the then usual salutations, and inquiries how she would like to have the window, he popped the old question, "How far was she going?" with very different feelings to what it was generally asked, when the traveller wished to calculate how soon he might hope to get rid of his *vis-à-vis* and lay up his legs on the seat.

"To town," replied the lady, dimpling her pretty cheeks with a smile. "And you?" asked she, thinking to have as good as she gave.

"Ditto," replied the delighted Billy, divesting himself of a great coarse blue and white worsted comforter, and pulling up his somewhat dejected gills, abandoning the idea of economising his Lincoln and Bennett by the substitution of an old Gregory's mixture coloured fur cap, with its great ears tied over the top, in which he had snoozed and snored through many a long journey.

Miss Willing then drew from her richly-buckled belt a beautiful Geneva watch set round with pearls (her ladyship's, which she was taking to town to have repaired), and Billy



OUR HERO'S ANCESTORS.

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The outside passengers having descended from their eminences, proceeded to flagellate themselves into circulation, and throw off their husks, while Billy strutted consequentially in with the lady on his arm, and placed her in the seat of honour beside himself at the top of the table. The outsiders then came swarming in, jostling the dish-bearers and seating themselves as they could. All seemed bent upon getting as much as they could for their money.

Pork was the repast. Pork in various shapes: roast at the top, boiled at the bottom, sausages on one side, fry on the other; and Miss Willing couldn't eat pork, and, curious coincidence! neither could Billy. The lady having intimated this to Billy in the most delicate way possible, for she had a particular reason for not wishing to aggravate the new landlord, Mr. Bouncible, Billy gladly sallied forth to give battle as it were on his own account, and by way of impressing the household with his consequence, he ordered a bottle of Teneriffe as he passed the bar, and then commenced a furious onslaught about the food when he got into the kitchen. This reading of the riot act brought Bouncible from his "Times," who, having been in the profession himself, took Billy for a nobleman's gentleman, or a house-steward at least—a class of men not so easily put upon as their masters. He therefore, after sundry regrets at the fare not being 'zactly to their mind, which he attributed to its being washing-day, offered to let them have the first turn at a very nice dish of hashed venison that was then simmering on the fire for Mrs. B. and himself, provided our travellers would have the goodness to call it hashed mutton, so that it might not be devoured by the outsiders, a class of people whom all landlords held in great contempt.

To this proposition Billy readily assented, and returned triumphantly to the object of his adoration. He then slashed right and left at the roast pork, and had every plate but hers full by the time the hashed mutton made its appearance. He then culled out all the delicate tit-bits for his fair partner, and decked her hot plate with sweet sauce and mealy potatoes. Billy's turn came next, and amidst demands for malt liquor and the arrival



QUITE "OPTIONAL" OF COURSE.

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of smoking tumblers of brown brandy and water, clatter, patter, clatter, patter, became the order of the day, with an occasional suspicious, not to say dissatisfied glance of a pork-eating passenger at the savoury dish at the top of the table. Mr. Bouncible, however, brought in the Teneriffe just at the critical moment, when Billy having replenished both plates, the pork-eaters might have expected to be let in; and walked off with the dish in exchange for the decanter.

Our friends then pledged each other in a bumper of Cape. The pork was followed by an extremely large strong-smelling Cheshire cheese, in a high wooden cradle, which in its turn was followed by an extremely large strong-smelling man, in a mountainous many-caped greatcoat, who, with a bob of his head and a kick out behind, intimated that paying time was come for him. Growls were then heard of its not being half an hour, or of not having had their full time, accompanied by dives into the pockets and reticules for the needful—each person wondering how little he could give without a snubbing. Quite “optional” of course. Billy, who was bent on doing the magnificent, produced a large green-and-gold-tasselled purse, almost as big as a stocking, and drew therefrom a great five-shilling piece, which, having tapped imposingly on his plate, he handed ostentatiously to the man, saying, “for this lady and me,” just as if she belonged to him; whereupon down went the head even with the table, with an undertoned intimation that Billy “needn’t ’urry, for he would make it all right with the guard.” The waiter followed close on the heels of the coachman, drawing everybody for half-a-crown for the dinner, besides what they had had to drink, and what they “pleased for himself,” and Billy again anticipated the lady by paying for both.

Instead, however, of disputing his right so to do, she seemed to take it as a matter of course, and bent a little forward and said in a sort of half-whisper, though loud enough to be heard by a twinkling-eyed, clayey-complexioned she-outsider, sitting opposite, dressed in a puce-coloured cloth pelisse and a pheasant-feather bonnet, “I fear you will think me very

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troublesome, but do you think you could manage to get me a finger-glass?" twiddling her pretty taper fingers as she spoke.

"Certainly!" replied Billy, all alacrity, "certainly."

"With a little tepid water," continued Miss Willing, looking imploringly at Billy as he rose to fulfil her behests.

"Such airs!" growled Pheasant-feathers to her next neighbour with an indignant toss of her colour-varying head.

Billy presently appeared, bearing one of the old deep blue-patterned finger-glasses, with a fine damask napkin, marked with a ducal coronet—one of the usual perquisites of servitude.

Miss then holding each pretty hand downwards, stripped her fingers of their rings, just as a gardener strips a stalk of currants of its fruit, dropping, however, a large diamond ring (belonging to her ladyship, which she was just airing) skilfully under the table, and for which fat Billy had to dive like a dog after an otter.

"Oh, dear!" she was quite ashamed at her awkwardness and the trouble she had given, she assured Billy, as he rose red and panting from the pursuit.

"Done on purpose to show her finery," muttered Pheasant-feather bonnet, with a sneer.

Miss having just passed the wet end of the napkin across her cherry lips and pearly teeth, and dipped her fingers becomingly in the warm water, was restoring her manifold rings, when the shrill *twang, twang, twang* of the horn, with the prancing of some of the newly-harnessed cripples on the pavement as they tried to find their legs, sounded up the archway into the little room, and warned our travellers that they should be reinvesting themselves in their wraps. So declining any more Teneriffe, Miss Willing set the example by drawing on her pretty kid gloves, and rising to give the time to the rest. Up they all got.

ASK MAMMA.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROAD RESUMED.



HE room, as we said before, being crammed, and our fair friend Miss Willing taking some time to pass gracefully down the line of chair-backs, many of whose late occupants were now swinging their arms about in all the exertion of tying up their mouths, and fighting their ways into their overcoats, Mr. Pringle, as he followed, had a good opportunity of examining her exquisite *tourneure*, than which he thought he never saw anything more beautifully perfect. He was quite proud when a little more width of room at the end of the table enabled him to squeeze past a robing, Dutch-built British-lace-vending pack-woman, and reclaim his fair friend, just as a gentleman does his partner, at the end of an old country dance. How exultingly he marched her through the line of inn hangers-on, hostlers, waiters, porters, post-boys, coachmen, and that insatiable Matthews-at-home of an inn establishment, "Boots," a gentleman who will undertake all characters in succession for a consideration. How thankful we ought to be to be done with these harpies!

Bouncible, either mistaking the rank of his guests, or wanting to have a better look at the lady, emerged from his glass-fronted den of a bar, and salaam'd them up to the dirty coach, where the highly-fee'd coachman stood door in hand, waiting to perform the last act of attention for his money. In went Billy and the beauty, or rather the beauty and Billy, bang went the door, the outsiders scrambled up on to their perches and shelves as best they could. "*All right! Sit tight!*" was presently heard,



THE PASSING OF THE STAGE-COACH.

ASK MAMMA.

and whip, jip, crack, cut, three blind 'uns and a bolter were again bumping the lumbering vehicle along the cobble-stoned street, bringing no end of cherry cheeks and corkscrew ringlets to the windows, to mark that important epoch of the day, the coach passing by.

Billy, feeling all the better for his dinner, and inspirited by sundry gulps of wine, proceeded to make himself comfortable, in order to open fire as soon as ever the coach got off the stones. He took a rapid retrospect of all the various angels he had encountered, those who had favoured him, those who had frowned, and he was decidedly of opinion that he had never seen anything to compare to the fair lady before him. He was rich and thriving, and would please himself without consulting Want-nothin'-but-what's-right Jerry, Half-a-yard-of-the-table Joe, or any of them. It wasn't like as if they were to be in Co. with him in the lady. She would never come into the balance-sheets. No; she was to be all his, and they had no business with it. He believed Want-nothin'-but-what's-right would be glad if he never married. Just then the coach glid from the noisy pavement on to the comparatively speaking silent macadamised road, and Billy and the lady opened fire simultaneously, the lady about the discomforts of coach travelling, which she had never tried before, and Billy about the smack of the Teneriffe, which he thought very earthy. He had some capital wine at home, he said, as everybody has. This led him to London, the street conveniences or inconveniences as they then were of the metropolis, which subject he plied for the purpose of finding out as well where the lady lived as whether her carriage would meet her or not; but this she skilfully parried, by asking Billy where he lived, and finding it was Doughty Street, Russell Square, she observed, as in truth it is, that it was a very airy part of the town, and proceeded to expatiate on the beauty of the flowers in Covent Garden, from whence she got to the theatres, then to the opera, intimating a very considerable acquaintance as well with the capital as with that enchanted circle, the West-end, comprising in its contracted limits what is called the world.

ASK MAMMA.

Billy was puzzled. He wished she mightn't be a cut above him—such lords, such ladies, such knowledge of the court—could she be a maid-of-honour? Well, he didn't care. No ask no have, so he proceeded with the pumping process again. “Did she live in town?”

Fair Lady.—“Part of the year.”

Billy.—“During the season I s'pose?”

Fair Lady.—“During the sitting of Parliament.”

“There again!” thought Billy, feeling the expectation-funds fall ten per cent. at least. “Well, faint heart never won fair lady,” continued he to himself, considering how next he should sound her. She was very beautiful—what pretty pearly teeth she had, and such a pair of rosy lips—such a fair forehead, too, and *such* nice hair—he'd give a fipun note for a kiss!—he'd give a tenpun note for a kiss!—dash'd if he wouldn't give a fiftypun for a kiss! Then he wondered what Head-and-shoulders Smith would think of her. As he didn't seem to be making much progress, however, in the information way, he now desisted from that consideration, and while contemplating her beauty considered how best he should carry on the siege. Should he declare who and what he was, making the best of himself, of course, and ask her to be equally explicit, or should he beat about the bush a little longer and try to fish out what he could about her?

They had a good deal of day before them yet, dark though the latter part of it would be; which, however, on second thoughts, he felt might be rather favourable, inasmuch as she wouldn't see when he was taken aback by her answers. He would beat about the bush a little longer. It was very pleasant sport.

“Did you say you lived in Chelsea?” at length asked Billy, in a stupid self-convicting sort of way.

“No,” replied the fair lady, with a smile; “I never mentioned Chelsea.”

“Oh, no; no more you did,” replied Billy, taken aback, especially as the lady led up to no other place.

“Did she like the country?” at length asked he, thinking to

try and fix her locality there, if he could not earth her in London.

“Yes, she liked the country, at least out of the season—there was no place like London in the season,” she thought.

Billy thought so too; it was the best place in summer, and the only place in winter.

Well, the lady didn’t know, but if she had to choose either place for a permanency, she would choose London.

This sent the Billy funds up a little. He forgot his intention of following her into the country, and began to expatiate upon the luxuries of London, the capital fish they got, the cod and hoyster sauce (for when excited, he knocked his h’s about a little), the cod and hoyster sauce, the turbot, the mackerel, the mullet, that woodcock of the sea, as he exultingly called it, thinking what a tuck-out he would have in revenge for his country inn abstinence. He then got upon the splendour of his own house in Doughty Street—the most agrceable in London. Its spacious entrance, its elegant stone staircase; his beautiful drawing-room, with its maroon and rose-coloured brocaded satin damask curtains, and rich Tournay carpet, its beautiful chandelier of eighteen lights, and Piccolo pianoforte, and was describing a most magnificent mirror—we don’t know what size, but most beautiful and becoming—when the pace of the vehicle was sensibly felt to relax; and before they had time to speculate on the cause, it had come to a standstill.

“Stopped,” observed Billy, lowering the window to look out for squalls.

No sooner was the window down, than a head at the door proclaimed mischief. The *tête-à-tête* was at an end. The guard was going to put Pheasant-feather bonnet inside. Open sesame—*w-h-i-s-h*. In came the cutting wind—oh dear, what a day!

ASK MAMMA.

CHAPTER V.

MISS PHEASANT-FEATHERS



“UM for a leddy?” asked the guard, raising a great half-frozen, grog-blossomy face out of the blue and white coil of a shawl-cravat in which it was enveloped—“*Git in,*” continued he, shouldering the leddy up the steps, without waiting for an answer, and in popped Pheasant-feathers; when, slamming-to the door, he cried “*Right!*” to the coachman, and on went the vehicle, leaving the enterer to settle into a seat by its shaking, after the manner of the omnibus cads, who seem to think all they have to do is to see people past the door. As it was, the new comer alighted upon Billy, who cannoned her off against the opposite door, and then made himself as big as he could, the better to incommode her. Pheasant-feathers, however, having effected an entrance, seemed to regard herself as good as her neighbours, and forthwith proceeded to adjust the window to her liking, despite the eyeing and staring of Miss Willing. Billy was indignant at the nasty peppermint-drop-smelling woman intruding between the wind and his beauty, and inwardly resolved he would dock the guard’s fee for his presumption in putting her there. Miss Willing gathered herself together as if afraid of contamination; and, forgetting her rôle, declared, after a jolt received in one of her seat-shiftings, that it was just the “smallest coach she had ever been in.” She then began to scrutinise her female companion’s attire.

A cottage-bonnet, made of pheasant-feathers: was there ever such a frightful thing seen—all the colours of the rainbow

ASK MAMMA.

combined—must be a poacher's daughter, or a poulterer's. Paste egg-coloured ribbons; what a cloth pelisse—puce colour in some parts—bath-brick colour in others—nearly drab in others—thread-bare all over. Daresay she thought herself fine, with her braided waist, up to her ears. Her glazy gloves might be any colour—black, brown, green, grey. Then a qualm shot across Miss Willing's mind that she had seen the pelisse before. Yes, no, yes; she believed it was the very one she had sold to Mrs. Pickles, nursery governess, for eighteen shillings. So it was. She had stripped the fur edging off herself, and there were the marks. Who could the wearer be? Where could she have got it? She could not recollect ever having seen her unwholesome face before. And yet the little ferrety, white-lashed eyes settled upon her as if they knew her. Who could she be? What, if she had lived fellow—(we'll not say what)—with the creature somewhere. There was no knowing people out of their working clothes, especially when they set up to ride inside of coaches. Altogether, it was very unpleasant.

Billy remarked his fair friend's altered mood, and rightly attributed it to the intrusion of the nasty woman, whose gaudy head-gear the few flickering rays of a December sun were now lighting up, making the feathers, so beautiful on a bird, look, to Billy's mind, so ugly on a bonnet, at least on the bonnet that now thatched the frightful face beside him. Billy saw the fair lady was not accustomed to these sort of companions, and wished he had only had the sense to book the rest of the inside when the coach stopped to dine. However, it could not be helped now; so, having ascertained that Pheasant-feathers was going all the way to "Lunnun," as she called it, when the sun sunk behind its massive leaden cloud, preparatory to that long reign of darkness with which travellers were oppressed—for there were no oil-lamps to the roofs of stage-coaches—Billy being no longer able to contemplate the beauties of his charmer, now changed his seat, for a little confidential conversation by her side. He then, after a few comforting remarks, not very flattering to Pheasant-feathers' beauty, resumed his expatiations

ASK MAMMA.

about his splendid house in Doughty Street, Russell Square, omitting, of course, to mention that it had been fitted up to suit the taste of another lady, who had jilted him. He began about his dining-room, twenty-five feet by eighteen, with a polished steel fender, and "pictors" all about the walls; for, like many people, he fancied himself a judge of the fine arts, and, of course, was very frequently fleeced. This subject, however, rather hung fire, a dining-room being about the last room in a house that a lady cares to hear about, so she presently cajoled him into the more genial region of the kitchen, which, unlike would-be fine ladies of the present day, she was not ashamed to recognise. From the kitchen they proceeded to the store-room, which Billy explained was entered by a door at the top of the back-stairs, six feet nine by two feet eight, covered on both sides with crimson cloth, brass moulded in panels and mortise latch.

He then got upon the endless, but "never-lady-tiring," subject of bedrooms—his best bedroom, with a most elegant five-feet-three canopy-top mahogany bedstead, with beautiful French chintz furniture, lined with pink, outer and inner valance, trimmed silk tassel fringe, &c., &c., &c. And so he went maundering on, paving the way most elaborately to an offer, as some men are apt to do, instead of getting briskly to the "ask-mamma" point, which the ladies are generally anxious to have them at. To be sure, Billy had been bowled over by a fair, or rather unfair one, who had appeared quite as much interested about his furniture and all his belongings as Miss Willing did, and who, when she got the offer, and found he was not nearly so well off as Jack Sanderson, declared she was never so surprised in her life as when Billy proposed; for though, as she politely said, every one who knew him must respect him, yet he had never even entered her head in any other light than that of an agreeable companion. This was Miss Amelia Titterton, afterwards Mrs. Sanderson. Another lady, as we said before (Miss Bowerbank), had done worse; for she had regularly jilted him, after putting him to no end of expense in furnishing his house, so that, upon the whole, Billy had cause to be cautious. A coach, too, with its jolts and

ASK MAMMA.

its jerks, and its brandy-and-water stoppages, is but ill calculated for the delicate performance of offering, to say nothing of having a pair of nasty white-lashed, inquisitive-looking, ferrety eyes sitting opposite, with a pair of listening ears, nestling under the thatch of a pheasant-feather bonnet.

All things considered, therefore, Billy may, perhaps, stand excused for his slowness, especially as he did not know but what he was addressing a countess. And so the close of a scarcely dawned December day was followed by the shades of night, and still the jip, jip, jipping; whip, whip, whipping; creak, creak, creaking of the heavy lumbering coach was accompanied by Billy's maunderings about his noble ebony this, and splendid mahogany that, varied with, here and there, a judicious interpolation of an "indeed," or a "how beautiful," from Miss Willing, to show how interested she was in the recital; for ladies are generally good listeners, and Miss Willing was essentially so. The "demeanour of the witness" was lost, to be sure, in the chancery-like darkness that prevailed; and Billy felt it might be all blandishment, for nothing could be more marked or agreeable than the interest both the other ladies had taken in his family, furniture, and effects. Indeed, as he felt, they all took much the same course, for, for cool home-questioning, there is no man can compete with an experienced woman. They get to the "What-have-you-got, and What-will-you-do" point before a man has settled upon the line of inquiry—very likely before he has got done with that interesting topic—the weather.

At length a sudden turn of the road revealed to our friends, who were sitting with their faces to the horses, the first distant curve of glow-worm-like lamps in the distance, and presently the great white invitations to "TRY WARREN'S," or "DAY AND MARTIN'S BLACKING," began to loom through the darkness of the dead walls of the outskirts of London. They were fast approaching the metropolis. The gaunt elms and leafless poplars presently became fewer, while castellated and sentry-box-looking summer-houses stood dark in the little palcd-off gardens. At last the villas, and semi-detached villas, collapsed

ASK MAMMA.

into one continuous gas-lit shop-dotted street. The shops soon became better and more frequent—more ribbons and flowers, and fewer periwinkle stalls. They now got upon the stones. Billy's heart jumped into his mouth at the jerk, for he knew not how soon his charmer and he might part, and as yet he had not even ascertained her locality. Now or never, thought he, rising to the occasion, and, with difficulty of utterance, he expressed a hope that he might have the pleasure of seeing her 'ome.

"Thank you, *no*," replied Miss Willing, emphatically, for it was just the very thing she most dreaded, letting him see her reception by the servants.

"Humph!" grunted Billy, feeling his funds fall five-and-twenty per cent.—"Miss Titterton or Miss Bowerbank over again," thought he.

"Not but that I most fully appreciate your kindness," whispered Miss Willing, in the sweetest tone possible, right into his ear, thinking by Billy's silence that her vehemence had offended him: "but," continued she, "I'm only going to the house of a friend, a long way from you, and I expect a servant to meet me at the Green Man in Oxford Street."

"Well, but let me see you to the"—(puff, gasp)—"Green Man," ejaculated Billy, the funds of hope rising more rapidly than his words.

"It's very kind," whispered Miss Willing, "and I feel it *very*, *very* much, but——"

"But if your servant shouldn't come," interrupted Billy, "you'd never find your way to Brompton in this nasty dense yellow fog," for they had now got into the thick of a fine fat one.

"Oh, but I'm not going to Brompton," exclaimed Miss Willing, amused at this second bad shot of Billy's at her abode.

"Well, wherever you are going, I shall only be too happy to escort you," replied Billy; "I know Lunnun well."

"So do I," thought Miss Willing, with a sigh. And the coach having now reached that elegant hostelry, the George and Blue Badger, in High Holborn, Miss showed her knowledge

ASK MAMMA.

of it by intimating to Billy that that was the place for him to alight; so taking off her glove she tendered him her soft hand, which Billy grasped eagerly, still urging her to let him see her home, or at all events to the Green Man, in Oxford Street.

Miss, however, firmly but kindly declined his services, assuring him repeatedly that she appreciated his kindness, which she evinced by informing him that she was going to a friend's at No. —, Grosvenor Square, that she would only be in town for a couple of nights; but that if he *really* wished to see her again—" *really* wished it," she repeated with an emphasis, for she didn't want to be trifled with—she would be happy to see him to tea at eight o'clock on the following evening.

" *Eight o'clock!* " gasped Billy. " No. —, Gruvenor Square," repeated he. " I knows it—I'll be with you to a certainty—I'll be with you to a "—(puff)—" certainty." So saying, he made a sandwich of her fair taper-fingered hand, and then responded to the inquiry of the guard, if there was any one to " git oot there," by alighting. And he was so excited that he walked off, leaving his new silk umbrella and all his luggage in the coach, exclaiming, as he worked his way through the fog to Doughty Street, " No. —, Gruvenor Square—eight o'clock—eight o'clock—No. —, Gruvenor Square—was there ever such a beauty!—be with her to a certainty, be with her to a certainty." Saying which, he gave an ecstatic bound, and next moment found himself sprawling a-top of a murder!-crying apple-woman in the gutter. Leaving him there to get up at his leisure, let us return to his late companion in the coach.

Scarcely was the door closed on his exit, ere a sharp shrill "*You don't know me!—you don't know me!*" sounded from under the pheasant-feather bonnet, and shot through Miss Willing like a thrill.

" Yes, no, yes; who is it?" ejaculated she, thankful they were alone.

" Sarey Grimes, to be sure," replied the voice, in a semi-tone of exultation.

" Sarah Grimes!" exclaimed Miss Willing, recollecting the veriest little imp of mischief that ever came about a place, the

ASK MAMMA.

daughter of a most notorious poacher. "So it is! Why, Sarah, who would ever have thought of seeing you grown into a great big woman."

"I thought you didn't know me," replied Sarah; "I used often to run errands for you," added she.

"I remember," replied Miss Willing, feeling in her reticule for her purse. Sarah had carried certain delicate missives in the country that Miss Willing would now rather have forgotten. How thankful she was that the creature had not introduced herself when her fat friend was in the coach. "What are you doing now?" asked Miss Willing, jingling up the money at one end of the purse to distinguish between the gold and the silver.

Sarey explained that being now out of place (she had been recently dismissed from a cheesemonger's at Lutterworth for stealing a copper coal-scoop, a pound of whitening, and a pair of gold spectacles, for which a donkey-travelling general merchant had given her seven-and-sixpence), the guard of the coach, who was her great-uncle, had given her a lift up to town to try what she could do there again; and Miss Willing's quick apprehension seeing that there was some use to be made of such a sharp-witted thing, having selected a half-sovereign out of her purse, thus addressed her:

"Well, Sarah, I'm glad to see you again. You are very much improved, and will be very good-looking. There's half-a-sovereign for you," handing it to her; "and if you'll come to me at six o'clock to-morrow evening in Grosvenor Square, I daresay I shall be able to look out some things that may be useful to you."

"Thanke, mum; thanke!" exclaimed Sarey, delighted at the idea. "I'll be with you, you may depend."

"You know Big Ben," continued Miss Willing, "who was my lord's own man; he's hall porter now, ring and tell him you come for me, and he'll let you in at the door."

"Certainly, mum, certainly," assented Pheasant-feathers, thinking how much more magnificent that would be than sneaking down the area.

And the coach having now reached the Green Man, Miss

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Willing alighted and took a coach to Grosvenor Square, leaving Miss Grimes to pursue its peregrinations to the end of its journey.

And Billy Pringle having, with the aid of the “pollis,” appeased the basket-woman’s wrath, was presently ensconced in his beautiful house in Doughty Street.

So, *tinkle, tinkle, tinkle*—down goes the curtain on this somewhat long chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

A GLASS-COACH



Billy driving in State.

EXT day
our friend
Billy was
busied in
looking
after his
lost lug-
gage and
burnish-
ing up the
gilt bugle-
horn but-
tons of
the coat,
waistcoat,
and shorts

of the Royal Epping Archers, in which he meant to figure in the evening. Having, through the medium of his "Boyle," ascertained the rank of the owner of the residence where he was going to be regaled, he ordered a glass-coach—not a coach made of glass, juvenile readers, in which we could see a gentleman disporting himself like a gold fish in a glass bowl, but a better sort of hackney coach with a less filthy driver, which, by a "beautiful fiction" of the times, used to be considered the hirer's "private carriage."

It was not "the thing" in those days to drive up to a

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gentleman's door in a public conveyance, and doing the magnificent was very expensive; for the glass fiction involved a pair of gaunt raw-boned horses, which, with the napless-hatted drab-turned-up-with-grease-coated coachman, left very little change out of a sovereign. How thankful we ought to be to railways and Mr. Fitzroy for being able to cut about openly at the rate of sixpence a mile. The first great man who drove up St. James's Street at high tide in a Hansom, deserves to have his portrait painted at the public expense, for he opened the door of common sense and utility.

What a follow-my-leader-world it is! People all took to street cabs simultaneously, just as they did to walking in the Park on a Sunday when Count D'Orsay set up his "'andsomest ombrella in de vorld," being no longer able to keep a horse. But we are getting into recent times instead of attending Mr. Pringle to his party. He is supposed to have ordered his glass phenomenon.

Now Mr. Forage, the job-master in Lamb's Conduit Street, with whom our friend did his magnificence, "performed funerals" also, as his yard-doors indicated, and being rather "full," or more properly speaking, empty, he acted upon the principle of all coaches being black in the dark, and sent a mourning one, so there was a striking contrast between the gaiety of the Royal Epping Archers' uniform—pea-green coat with a blue collar, salmon-coloured vest and shorts—in which Mr. Pringle was attired, and the gravity of the vehicle that conveyed him. However, our lover was so intent upon taking care of his pumps, for the fog had made the flags both slippery and greasy, that he popped in without noticing the peculiarity, and his stuttering knock-knee'd hobble-de-hoy, yclept "Paul," having closed the door and mounted up behind, they were presently jingling away to the west, Billy putting up first one leg and then the other on to the opposite seat to admire his white-gauze-silk-encased calves by the gas and chemists' windows as they passed. So he went fingering and feeling at his legs, and pulling and hauling at his coat—for the Epping Archer uniform had got rather tight, and, moreover, had been



BIG BEN.

ASK MAMMA.

made on the George-the-Fourth principle, of not being easily got into—along Oxford Street, through Hanover Square, and up Brook Street, to the spacious region that contained the object of his adoration. The coach presently drew up at a stately Italian-column porticoed mansion; down goes Paul, but before he gets half through his meditated knock, the door opens suddenly in his face, and he is confronted by Big Ben in the full livery—we beg pardon—uniform of the Delacey family, beetroot-coloured coat, with cherry-coloured vest and shorts, the whole elaborately bedizened with gold lace.

The unexpected apparition, rendered more formidable by the blazing fire in the background throwing a lurid light over the giant, completely deprived little Paul of his breath, and he stood gaping and shaking as if he expected the monster to address him.

“Who may you please to want?” at length demanded Ben, in a deep sonorous tone of mingled defiance and contempt.

“P—p—p—please, wo—wo—wo—want,” stuttered little Paul, now recollecting that he had never been told who to ask for.

“Yes, who do you wish to see?” demanded Ben, in a clear explanatory tone, for though he had agreed to dress up for the occasion, on the reciprocity principle of course—Miss Willing winking at his having two nephews living in the house—he by no means undertook to furnish civility to any of the undergraduates of life, as he called such apologies as Paul.

“I—I—I’ll ask,” replied Paul, glad to escape back to the coach, out of which the Royal Archer’s bull-head was now protruding, anxious to be emancipated.

“Who—ho—ho am I to a—a—ask for, pa—pa—pcr—please?” stuttered Paul, trembling all over with fear and excitement, for he had never seen such a sight except in a show.

“Ask for!” muttered Billy, now recollecting for the first time that the fair lady and he were mutually ignorant of each other’s names. “Ask for! What if it should be a hoax?” thought he; “how foolish he would look!”

While these thoughts were revolving in Billy’s mind, Big

ASK MAMMA.

Ben, having thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his cherry-coloured shorts, was contemplating the dismal-looking coach in the disdainful cock-up-nose sort of way that a high life Johnny looks at what he considers a low life equipage; wondering, we daresay, who was to be deceived by such a thing.

Billy, seeing the case was desperate, resolved to put a bold face on the matter, especially as he remembered his person could not be seen in the glass coach; so, raising his crush hat to his face, he holloaed out, "*I say! is this the Earl of Delacey's?*"

"It is," replied Ben, with a slight inclination of his gigantic person.

"Then, let me out," demanded Billy of Paul. And this request being complied with, Billy skipped smartly across the flags, and was presently alongside of Ben, whispering up into his now slightly-inclined ear, "*I say, was there a lady arrived here last night from the country?*" (He was going to say "by the coach," but he checked himself when he got to the word country.)

"There was, sir," replied Ben, relaxing into something like condescension.

"Then I'm come to see her," whispered Billy, with a grin.

"Your name, if you please, sir?" replied Ben, still getting up the steam of politeness.

"Mr. Pringle—Mr. William Pringle!" replied Billy with firmness.

"All right, sir," replied the blood-red monster, pretending to know more than he did; and, motioning Billy onward into the black and white marble-flagged entrance hall, he was about to shut him in, when Billy, recollecting himself, holloaed, "'Ome!" to his coachman, so that he mightn't be let in for the two days' hire. The door then closed, and he was in for an adventure.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS WILLING (*EN GRAND COSTUME*).



T will be evident to our fair friends that the Archer bold had the advantage over the lady, in having all his raiment in town, while she had all hers, at least all the pick of hers—her first-class things—in the country. Now everybody knows that what looks very smart in the country looks very seedy in London, and though the country cousins of life do get their new things to take back with them there, yet regular town comers have theirs ready, or ready at all events to try on against they arrive, and so have the advantage of looking like civilised people while they are up. London, however, is one excellent place for remedying any little deficiency of any sort, at least if a person has only either money or credit, and a lady or gentleman can soon be rigged out by driving about to the different shops.

Now it so happened that Miss Willing had nothing of her own in town, that she felt she would be doing herself justice to appear before Billy in, and had omitted bringing her ladyship's keys, whereby she might have remedied the deficiency out of that wardrobe; however, with such a commission as she held, there could be no difficulty in procuring the loan of whatever was wanted from her ladyship's milliner. We may mention that on accepting office under Lady Delaccy, Miss Willing, with the greatest spirit of fairness, had put her ladyship's custom in competition among three distinguished modistes, viz. her old friend Madame Adelaide Banboxency, Madame Celeste de Montmorency, of Dover Street, and Miss Julia

ASK MAMMA.

Freemantle, of Cowslip Street, May Fair ; and Miss Freemantle having offered the same percentage on the bill (15*l.*) as the other two, and 20*l.* a year certain money more than Madame Banboxeney, and 25*l.* more than Madame Celeste de Montmorency, Miss Freemantle had been duly declared the purchaser, as the auctioneers say, and in due time (as soon as a plausible quarrel could be picked with the then milliner) was in the enjoyment of a very good thing, for though the Countess Delacey, in the Gilpin-ian spirit of the age, tried to tie Miss Freemantle down to price, yet she overlooked the extras, the little embroidery of a bill, if we may so call it, such as four pound seventeen and sixpence for a buckle, worth perhaps the odd silver, and the surreptitious lace, at no one knows what, so long as they were not all in one item, and were cleverly scattered about the bill in broken sums, just as the lady thought the ribbon dear at a shilling a yard, but took it when the counter-skipper replied, "S'pose, marm, then, we say thirteen pence."—Miss Willing having had a consultation with Miss Freemantle as to the most certain means of quashing the Countess of Honiton, broached her own little requirements, and Miss Freemantle, finding that she only wanted the dress for one night, agreed to lend her a very rich emerald-green Genoa velvet evening-dress, trimmed with broad Valenciennes lace, she was on the point of furnishing for Alderman Boozey's son's bran-new wife ; Miss Freemantle feeling satisfied, as she said, that Miss Willing would do it no harm ; indeed, would rather benefit it by the sit her fine figure would give it, in the same way as shooters find it to their advantage to let their keepers have a day or two's wear out of their new shoes in order to get them to go easy for themselves.

The reader will therefore have the goodness to consider Miss Willing arrayed in Alderman Boozey's son's bran-new wife's bran-new Genoa velvet dress, with a wreath of pure white camellias on her beautiful brown Madonna-dressed hair, and a massive true-lover's-knot brooch in brilliants at her bosom. On her right arm she wears a magnificent pearl armlet, which Miss Freemantle had on sale or return from that equitable diamond

ASK MAMMA.

merchant, Samuel Emanuel Moses, of the Minories, the price ranging, with Miss Freemantle, from eighty to two hundred and fifty guineas, according to the rank and paying properties of the inquirer, though as between Moses and "Mantle," the price was to be sixty guineas, or perhaps pounds, depending upon the humour Moses might happen to be in, when she came with the dear £ s. d. The reader will further imagine an elegant little boudoir with its amber-coloured silk fittings and furniture, lit up with the united influence of the best wax and Wallsend, and Miss Willing sitting at an inlaid centre-table, turning over the leaves of Heath's "Picturesque Annual" of the preceding year. Opposite the fire are large white and gold folding-doors, opening we know not where, outside of which lurks Pheasant-feathers, placed there by Miss Willing on a service of delicacy.



Sarah Grimes "on duty."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LADY'S BOUDOIR



Billy received in State.

HIS way, sir,
—please, sir,
—yes sir,”
bowed the
now obse-
quious Ben,
guiding Billy
by the light
of a cham-
ber candle
through the
intricacies
of the half-lit in-
ner entrance.
“Take care,
sir, there’s a
step, sir,”
continued he,

stopping and showing where the first stumbling block resided. Billy then commenced the gradual ascent of the broad, gently-rising staircase, each step increasing his conviction of the magnitude of the venture, and making him feel that his was not the biggest house in town. As he proceeded he wondered what Nothin’-but-what’s-right Jerry, or Half-a-yard-of-the-table Joe, above all Mrs. Half-a-yard-of-the-table, would say if they could see him thus visiting at a nobleman’s house. It seemed more like summut in a book or a play than downright reality. Still there

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was no reason why a fine lady should not take a fancy to him—many deuced deal uglier fellows than he had married fine ladies, and he would take his chance along with the rest of them—so he laboured up after Ben, hoping he might not come downstairs quicker than he went up.

The top landing being gained, they passed through lofty folding-doors into the suite of magnificent but now put-away drawing-rooms, whose spectral half-collapsed canvas bags, and covered statues and sofas, threw a Kensal-Green-Cemetery sort of gloom over Billy's spirits; speedily, however, to be dispelled by the radiance of the boudoir into which he was now passed through an invisible door in the gilt-papered wall. "Mr. William Pringle, ma'm," whispered Ben, in a tone that one could hardly reconcile to the size of the monster: and Miss Willing having risen at the sound of the voice, bowing Billy and she were presently locked hand in hand, smiling and teeth-showing most extravagantly. "I'll ring for tea presently," observed she to Ben, who seemed disposed to fuss and loiter about the room. "If you please, my lady," replied Ben, bowing himself backwards through the panel. Happy Billy was then left alone with his charmer, save that beetroot-coloured Ben was now listening at one door on his own account, and Pheasant-feathers at the other on Miss Willing's.

Billy was quite taken aback. If he had been captivated in the coach, what chance had he now, with all the aid of dress, scenery, and decorations. He thought he had never seen such a beauty—he thought he had never seen such a bust—he thought he had never seen such an arm! Miss Titterton—pooh!—wasn't to be mentioned in the same century—hadn't half such a waist. "Won't you be seated?" at length asked Miss Willing, as Billy still stood staring and making a mental inventory of her charms. "Seat"—(puff)—"seat" (wheeze), gasped Billy, looking round at the shining amber-coloured magnificence by which he was surrounded, as if afraid to venture, even in his nice salmon-coloured shorts. At length he got squatted on a gilt chair by his charmer's side, when taking to look at his toes, she led off the ball of conversation.

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She had had enough of the billing and cooing or gammon and spinach of matrimony, and knew if she could not bring him to book at once, time would not assist her. She soon probed his family circle, and was glad to find there was no "mamma" to "ask," that dread parent having more than once been too many for her. She took in the whole range of connection with the precision of an auctioneer or an equity draftsman.

There was no occasion for much diplomacy on her part, for Billy came into the trap just like a fly to a "Ketch-'em-alive O!" The conversation soon waxed so warm that she quite forgot to ring for the tea; and Ben, who affected early hours in the winter, being slightly asthmatical, as a hall-porter ought to be, at length brought it in of his own accord. Most polite he was: "My lady" and "Your ladyship-ing" Miss Willing with accidental intention every now and then, which raised Billy's opinion of her consequence very considerably. And so he sat, and sipped and sipped, and thought what a beauty she would be to transfer to Doughty Street. Tea, in due time, was followed by the tray—Melton pie, oysters, sandwiches, anchovy toast, bottled stout, sherry and Seltzer water, for which latter there was no demand.

A profane medicine-chest-looking mahogany case then made its appearance, which, being opened, proved to contain four cut-glass spirit bottles, labelled respectively, "Rum," "Brandy," "Whiskey," "Gin," though they were not true inscriptions, for there were two whiskeys and two brandies. A good old-fashioned black-bottomed kettle having next mounted a stand placed on the top bar, Miss intimated to Ben that if they had a few more coals, he need not "trouble to sit up;" and these being obtained, our friends made a brew, and then drew their chairs together to enjoy the feast of reason and the flow of soul; Miss slightly raising Alderman Boozey's son's bran-new wife's bran-new emerald-green velvet dress to show her beautiful white-satin slippared foot, as it now rested on the polished steel fender.

ASK MAMMA.

CHAPTER IX.

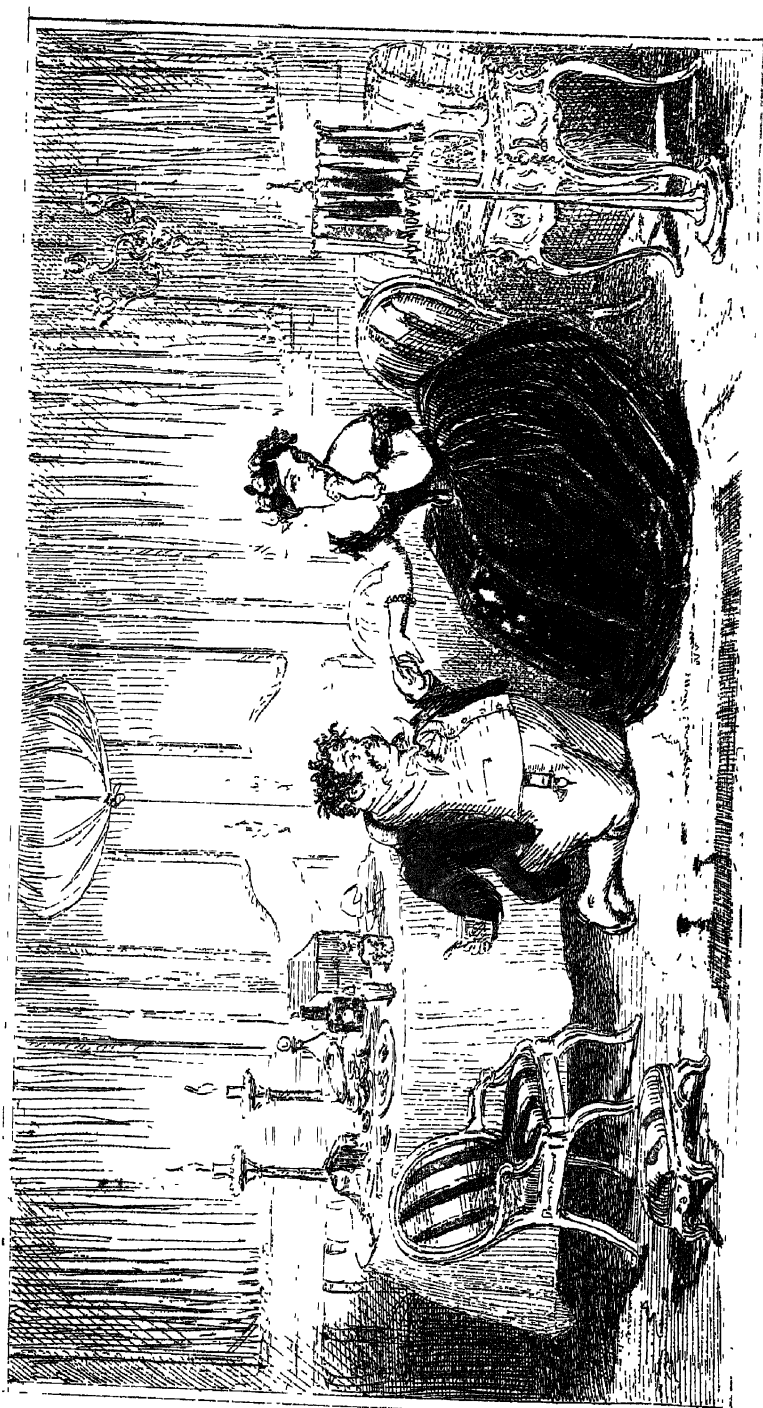
A DECLARATION.



HE awkwardness of resuming the interrupted addresses being at length overcome by sundry gulps of the inspiring fluid, our friend Mr. Pringle was soon in full fervour again. He anathematised the lawyers and settlements, and delay, and was all for being married off-hand at the moment.

Miss, on her part, was dignified and prudent. All she would say was that Mr. William Pringle was not indifferent to her—"No," sighed she, "he wasn't"—but there were many, many considerations, and many, many points to be discussed, and many, many questions to be asked of each other, before they could even begin to *talk* of such a thing as immediate—"hem"—(she wouldn't say the word) turning away her pretty head.

"*Ask away, then!*" exclaimed Billy, helping himself to another beaker of brandy—for he saw he was approaching the "Ketch-'em-alive O." Miss then put the home-question whether his family knew what he was about, and finding they did not, she saw there was no time to lose; so knocking off the expletives, she talked of many considerations and points, the main one being to know how she was likely to be kept—whether she was to have a full-sized footman, or an under-sized stripling, or a buttony boy of a page, or be waited upon by that greatest aversion to all female minds, one of her own sex. Not that she had the slightest idea of saying "No," but her experience of life teaching her that all earthly grandeur may be measured by footmen, she could very soon calculate what sort



The Ancestors of Mr. W.

ASK MAMMA.

of a set down she was likely to have by knowing the style of her attendant. "Show me your footman, and I'll tell you what you are," was one of her maxims. Moreover, it is well for all young ladies to have a sort of rough estimate, at all events, of what they are likely to have—which, we will venture to say, unlike estimates in general, will fall very far short of the reality. Our friend Billy, however, was quite in the promising mood, and if she had asked for half-a-dozen Big Bens he would have promised her them, canes, powder, and all.

"Oh! she should have anything, everything she wanted! A tall man with good legs, and all right about the mouth—an Arab horse, an Erard harp, a royal pianoforte, a silver tea-urn, a gold coffee-pot, a service of gold—*eat gold*, if she liked," and as he declared she might eat gold if she liked, he dropped upon his salmon-coloured knees, and with his glass of brandy in one hand, and hers in the other, looked imploringly up at her, a beautiful specimen of heavy sentimentality; and Miss, thinking she had got him far enough, and seeing it was nearly twelve o'clock, now urged him to rise, and allow her maid to go and get him a coach. Saying which, she disengaged her hand, and slipping through the invisible door, was presently whispering her behests to the giggling Pheasant-feathers, on the other side of the folding ones. A good half-hour, however, elapsed before one of those drowsy vehicles could be found, during which time our suitor obtained the fair lady's consent to allow him to meet her at her friend Mrs. Freemantle's, as she called her, in Cowslip Street, May Fair, at three o'clock on the following afternoon; and the coach having at length arrived, Miss Willing graciously allowed Mr. Pringle to kiss her hand, and then accompanied him to the second landing of the staircase, which commanded the hall, in order to check any communication between Pheasant-feathers and him.

The reader will now perhaps accompany us to this famed milliner, dress and mantle-maker's, who will be happy to execute any orders our fair ones may choose to favour her with.

Despite the anathemas of a certain law lord, match-forwarding is quite the natural prerogative and instinct of women. They

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all like it, from the duchess downwards, and you might as well try to restrain a cat from mousing as a woman from match-making. Miss Freemantle (who acted Mrs. on this occasion) was as fond of the pursuit as any one. She looked Billy over with a searching, scrutinising glance, thinking what a flat he was, and wondered what he would think of himself that time twelvemonths. Billy, on his part, was rather dumb-founded. Talking before two women was not so easy as talking to one; and he did not get on with the immediate matrimony story half so well as he had done over-night. The ladies saw his dilemma, and Miss Willing quickly essayed to relieve him. She put him through his pleadings with all the skill of the great Serjeant Silvertongue, making Billy commit himself most irretrievably.

“Mamma” (Miss Freemantle that is to say) then had her innings.

She was much afraid it couldn’t be done off-hand—indeed she was. There was a place on the Border—Gretna Green—she daresay’d he’d heard of it; but then it was a tremendous distance, and would take half a lifetime to get to it. Besides, Miss p’r’aps mightn’t like taking such a journey at that time of year.

Miss looked neither yes nor no. Mamma was more against it than her, Mamma feeling for the countess’s coming contest and her future favours. Other difficulties were then discussed, particularly that of publicity, which Miss dreaded more than the journey to Gretna. It must be kept secret, whatever was done. Billy must be sworn to secrecy, or Miss would have nothing to say to him. Billy was sworn accordingly.

Mamma then thought the best plan was to have the banns put up in some quiet church, where no questions would be asked as to where they lived, and it would be assumed that they resided within the parish, and when they had been called out, they could just go quietly and get married, which would keep things square with the countess and everybody else. And this arrangement being perfected, and liberty given to Billy to write to his bride, whose name and address were now furnished him, he at length took his departure; and the ladies having talked

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him over, then resolved themselves into a committee of taste, to further the forthcoming tournament. And by dint of keeping all hands at work all night, Miss Willing was enabled to return to the countess with the first instalment of such a series of lady-killing garments as mollified her heart, and enabled her to sustain the blow that followed, which, however, was mitigated by the assurance that Mr. and Mrs. William Pringle were going to live in London, and that Madam's taste would always be at her ladyship's command.

We wish we could gratify our lady readers with a description of the brilliant attire that so completely took the shine out of the Countess of Honiton as has caused her to hide her diminished head ever since, but our pen is unequal to the occasion, and even if we had had a John Leech to supply our deficiencies, the dresses of those days would look as nothing compared to the rotatory haystacks of the present one.

What fair lady can bear the sight of her face painted in one of the old poke bonnets of former days? To keep things right, the bonnet ought to be painted to the face every year or two.

But to the lovers.

In due time "Mamma" (Miss Freemantle) presented her blooming daughter to the happy Billy, who was attended to the hymeneal altar by his confidential clerk, Head-and-shoulders Smith. Big Ben, who was dressed in a blue frock coat with a velvet collar, white kerseymere trousers, and varnished boots, looking very like one of the old royal dukes, was the only other person present at the interesting ceremony, save Pheasant-feathers, who lurked in one of the pews.

The secret had been well kept, for the evening papers of that day and the morning ones of the next first proclaimed to the "great world," that sphere of one's own acquaintance, that William Pringle, Esquire, of Doughty Street, Russell Square, was married to Miss Emma Willing, of—the papers did not say where.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAPPY UNITED FAMILY



"A Peep of our Billy."

THE Pringles of course were furious when they read the announcement of Billy's marriage. Such a degradation to such a respectable family, and communicated in such a

way. We need scarcely say that at first they all made the worst of it, running Mrs. William down much below her real level, and declaring that Billy, though hard enough in money matters, was soft enough in love affairs. Then Mrs. Half-a-yard-of-the-table Joe, who up to that time had been the *belle* of the family, essayed to pick her to pieces, intimating that she was much indebted to her dress—that fine feathers made fine birds—

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hoped that Billy would like paying for the clothes, and wondered what her figure would be like a dozen years thence. Mrs. Joe had preserved hers, never indeed having been in the way of spoiling it. Joe looked as if he was to perpetuate the family name. By-and-by, when it became known that the Countess Delacey's yellow carriage, with the high-stepping greys and the cocked-up-nose beetroot-and-cherry-coloured Johnnies, was to be seen astonishing the natives in Doughty Street, they began to think better of it; and though they did not stint themselves for rudeness (disguised as civility of course), they treated her less like a show, more especially when Billy was present. Still, though they could not make up their minds to be really civil to her, they could not keep away from her, just as the moth will be at the candle despite its unpleasant consequences. Indeed, it is one of the marked characteristics of Snobbism, that they won't be cut. At least, if you do get a Snob cut, ten to one but he will take every opportunity of rubbing up against you, or sitting down beside you in public, or overtaking you on the road, or stopping a mutual acquaintance with you in the street, either to show his indifference or independence, or in the hope of its passing for intimacy. There are people who can't understand any coolness short of a kick.

The Pringles were tiresome people. They would neither be in with Mrs. William, nor out with her. So there was that continual nag, nag, nagging going on in the happy united family, that makes life so pleasant and enjoyable. Mrs. William well knew, when any of them came to call upon her, that her sayings and doings would furnish recreation for the rest of the cage. It is an agreeable thing to have people in one's house acting the part of spies. One day Mrs. Joe, who lived in Guildford Street, seeing the Countess's carriage-horses cold-catching in Doughty Street, while her ladyship discussed some important millinery question with Mrs. William, could not resist the temptation of calling, and not being introduced to the Countess, said to Mrs. William, with her best vinegar sneer, the next time they met, she "'oped she had told her fine friend that the vulgar woman she saw at her 'ouse was no connection of hers."

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But enough of such nonsense. Let us on to something more pleasant.

Well, then, of course the next step in our story is the appearance of our hero, the boy Billy—Fine Billy, aforesaid. Such a boy as never was seen! All other mammas went away dissatisfied with theirs, after they had got a peep of our Billy. If baby-shows had been in existence in those days, Mrs. Billy might have scoured the country and carried away all the prizes. Everybody was struck in a heap at the sight of him, and his sayings and doings were worthy of a place in Punch. So thought his parents, at least. What perfected their happiness, of course, operated differently with the family, and eased the minds of the ladies, as to the expediency of further outward civility to Mrs. William, who they now snubbed at all points, and prophesied all sorts of uncharitableness of. Mrs., on her side, surpassed them all in dress and good looks, and bucked Billy up into a very produceable-looking article. Though he mightn't exactly do for White's bay-window on a summer afternoon, he looked uncommonly well on "'Change," and capitally in the country. Of course, he came in for one of the three cardinal sources of abuse the world is always so handy with, viz., that a man either behaves ill to his wife, is a screw, or is out-running the constable, the latter, of course, being Billy's crime, which admitted of a large amount of blame being laid on the lady, though, we are happy to say, Billy had no trial of speed with the constable, for his wife, by whose permission men thrive, was a capital manager, and Billy slapped his fat thigh over his beloved balance-sheets every Christmas, exclaiming, as he hopped joyously round on one leg, snapping his finger and thumb, "*Our Billy shall be a gent! Our Billy shall be a gent!*" And he half came in to the oft-expressed wish of his wife, that he might live to see him united to a quality lady; Mr. and Lady Arabella Pringle, Mr. and Lady Sophia Pringle, or Mr. and Lady Charlotte Elizabeth Pringle, as the case might be.

Vainglorious ambition! After an inordinate kidney supper, poor Billy was found dead in his chair. Great was the

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consternation among the Pringle family at the lamentable affliction. All except Jerry, who, speculating on his habits, had recently effected a policy on his life, were deeply shocked at the event. They buried him with all becoming pomp, and then, Jerry, who had always professed great interest in the boy Billy—so great, indeed, as to induce his brother (though with no great opinion of Jerry, but hoping that his services would never be wanted, and that it might ingratiate the nephew with the bachelor uncle), to appoint him an executor and guardian—waited upon the widow, and with worlds of tears and pious lamentations, explained to her in the most unexplanatory manner possible, all how things were left, but begging that she would not give herself any trouble about her son's affairs, for, if she would attend to his spiritual wants, and instil high principles of honour, morality, and fine feeling into his youthful mind, he would look after the mere worldly dross, which was as nothing compared to the importance of the other. "Teach him to want nothin' but what's right," continued Jerry, as he thought most impressively. "Teach him to want nothin' but what's right, and when he grows up to manhood marry him to some nice, pious respectable young woman in his own rank of life, with a somethin' of her own; gentility is all very well to talk about, but it gets you nothin' at the market," added he, forgetting that he was against the mere worldly dross.

But Mrs. Pringle, who knew the value of the article, intimated at an early day, that she would like to be admitted into the money partnership as well, whereupon Jerry, waxing wroth, said with an irate glance of his keen grey eyes, "My dear madam, these family matters, in my opinion, require to be treated not only in a business-like way, but with a very considerable degree of delicacy;" an undisputed dogma, acquiring force only by the manner in which it was delivered. So the pretty widow saw she had better hold her tongue, and hope for the best from the little fawning bully.

CHAPTER XI.

CURTAIN CRESCENT.



HE melancholy catastrophe with which we closed our last chapter found our hero at a preparatory school, studying for Eton, whither papa proposed sending him on the old principle of getting him into good society ; though we believe it is an experiment that seldom succeeds. The widow, indeed, took this view of the matter, for her knowledge of high life caused her to know that though a "proud aristocracy" can condescend and even worship wealth, yet that they are naturally clannish and exclusive, and tenacious of pedigree. In addition to this, Mrs. Pringle's experience of men led her to think that the solemn pedantic "Greek and Latin ones," as she called them, who know all about Julius Cæsar coming, "*summa diligentia*," on the top of the diligence, were not half so agreeable as those who could dance and sing, and knew all that was going on in the present-day world ; which, in addition to her just appreciation of the delicate position of her son, made her resolve not to risk him among the rising aristocracy at Eton, who, instead of advancing, might only damage his future prospects in life, but to send him to Paris, where, besides the three R's—"reading, riting, and rithmetic"—he would acquire all the elegant accomplishments and dawn fresh upon the world an unexpected meteor.

This matter being arranged, she then left Dirty Street, as she called Doughty Street, with all the disagreeable Pringle family espionage, and reminiscences, and migrated westward, taking



JOHN PROPERJOHN.

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up her abode in the more congenial atmosphere of Curtain Crescent, Pimlico, or Belgravia, as we believe the owners of the houses wish to have it called. Here she established herself in a very handsome, commodious house, with porticoed doorway and balconied drawing-rooms—every requisite for a genteel family in short; and such a mansion being clearly more than a single lady required, she sometimes accommodated the less fortunate, through the medium of a house-agent, though both he and she always begged it to be distinctly understood that she did not let lodgings, but “apartments;” and she always requested that the consideration might be sent to her in a sealed envelope by the occupants, in the same manner as she transmitted them the bill. So she managed to make a considerable appearance at a moderate expense, it being only in the full season that her heart yearned towards the houseless, when of course a high premium was expected. There is nothing uncommon in people letting their whole houses; so why should there be anything strange in Mrs. Pringle occasionally letting a part of one? Clearly nothing. Though Mrs. Joe did say she had turned a lodging-house keeper, she could not refrain from having seven-and-sixpence worth of Brougham occasionally to see how the land lay.

It is but justice to our fair friend to say that she commenced with great prudence. So handsome unprotected a female being open to the criticisms of the censorious, she changed her good-looking footman for a sedate elderly man, whose name, Properjohn, John Properjohn, coupled with the severe austerity of his manners, was enough to scare away intruders, and to keep the young girls in order, whom our friend had consigned to her from the country, in the hopes that her drilling and recommendation would procure them admission into quality families.

Properjohn had been spoiled for high service by an attack of the jaundice, but his figure was stately and good, and she sought to modify his injured complexion by a snuff-coloured, Quaker-cut coat and vest, with claret-coloured shorts, and buckled shoes. Thus attired, with his oval-brimmed hat looped up with gold

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cord, and a large double-jointed brass-headed cane in his hand, he marched after his mistress, a damper to the most audacious. Properjohn, having lived in good families until he got spoiled by the jaundice, had a very extensive acquaintance among the aristocracy, with whom Mrs. Pringle soon established a peculiar intercourse. She became a sort of ultimate Court of Appeal, a *Cour de Cassation*, in all matters of taste in apparel—whether a bonnet should be lilac or lavender colour, a dress deeply flounced or lightly, a lady go to a ball in feathers or diamonds, or both—in all those varying and perplexing points that so excite and bewilder the female mind: Mrs. Pringle would settle all these; whatever Mrs. Pringle said the fair applicants would abide by, and milliners and dressmakers submitted to her judgment. This, of course, let her into the privacies of domestic life. She knew what husbands stormed at the milliners' and dressmakers' bills, bounced at the price of the opera-box, and were eternally complaining of their valuable horses catching cold. She knew who the cousin was who was always to be admitted in Lavender Square, and where the needle-case-shaped note went to after it had visited the toy shop in Arcadia Street. If her own information was defective, Properjohn could supply the deficiency. The two, between them, knew almost everything.

Nor was Mrs. Pringle's influence confined to the heads of houses, for it soon extended to many of the junior members also. It is a well-known fact that, when the gorgeous Lady Rainbow came to consult her about her daughter's goings on with Captain Conquest, the Captain and Matilda saw Mamma alight from the flaunting hammer-clothed tub, as they stood behind the figured yellow tabaret curtains of Mrs. Pringle's drawing-room window, whither they had been attracted by the thundering of one of the old noisy order of footmen. Blessings on the man, say we, who substituted bells for knockers—so that lovers may not be disturbed, or visitors unaccustomed to public knocking have to expose their incompetence.

We should, however, state, that whenever Mrs. Pringle was consulted by any of the juveniles upon their love affairs, she

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invariably suggested that they had better "Ask Mamma," though perhaps it was only done as a matter of form, and to enable her to remind them at a future day, if things went wrong, that she had done so. Many people make offers that they never mean to have accepted, but still, if they are not accepted, *they made them, you know*. If they are accepted, why then they wriggle out of them the best way they can. But we are dealing in generalities, instead of confining ourselves to Mrs. Pringle's practice. If the young lady or gentleman—for Mrs. Pringle was equally accessible to the sexes—preferred "asking" her to "Asking Mamma," Mrs. Pringle was always ready to do what she could for them; and the fine Sèvres and Dresden china, the opal vases, the Bohemian scent-bottles, the beautiful bronzes, the ormolu jewel caskets, and Parisian clocks, that mounted guard in the drawing-room when it was not "in commission" (occupied as apartments), spoke volumes for the gratitude of those she befriended. Mrs. Pringle was soon the repository of many secrets, but we need not say that the lady who so adroitly concealed Pheasant-feathers on her own account was not likely to be entrapped into committing others; and though she was often waited upon by pleasant conversationalists, on far-fetched errands, who endeavoured to draw carelessly down wind to their point, as well as by seedy and half-seedy gentlemen, who proceeded in a more business-like style, both the pleasant conversationalists and the seedy and the half-seedy gentlemen went away as wise as they came. She never knew anything; it was the first she had heard of anything of the sort.

Altogether, Mrs. Pringle was a wonderful woman, and not the least remarkable trait in her character was that, although servants who, like the rest of the world, are so ready to pull people down to their own level, knew her early professional career, yet she managed them so well that they all felt an interest in elevating her, from the Duke's Duke down to old quivering-calved Jeames de la Pluche, who sipped her hop champagne, and told all he heard while waiting at table—that festive period when people talk as if their attendants were cattle or inanimate beings.

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CHAPTER XII.

MISS BUTTER FINGERS



THE reader will now have the goodness to consider our friend, Fine Billy, established with his handsome mother in Curtain Crescent—not Pimlico, but Belgravia—with all the airs and actions described in our opening chapter. We have been a long time in working up to him, but the reader will not find the space wasted, inasmuch as it has given him a good introduction to “Madam,” under whose auspices Billy will shortly have to grapple with the “ASK MAMMA” world. Moreover, we feel that if there has been a piece of elegance overlooked by novelists generally, it is the delicate, sensitive, highly-refined lady’s-maid. With these observations we now pass on to the son. He had exceeded, if possible, his good mother’s Parisian anticipations, for if he had not brought away any great amount of learning, if he did not know a planet from a fixed star, the difference of oratory between Cicero and Demosthenes, or the history of Cupid and the minor heathen deities, he was nevertheless an uncommonly good hand at a polka, could be matched to waltz with any one, and had a tremendous determination of words to the mouth. His dancing propensities, indeed, were likely to mislead him at starting; for, not getting into the sort of society Mrs. Pringle wished to see him attain, he took up with Cremorne and Casinos, and questionable characters generally.

Mrs. Pringle’s own establishment, we are sorry to say, soon furnished her with the severest cause of disquietude; for having

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always acted upon the principle of having pretty maids—the difference, as she said, between pretty and plain ones being, that the men ran after the pretty ones, while the plain ones ran after the men—having always, we say, acted upon the principle of having pretty ones, she forgot to change her system on the return of her hopeful son; and before she knew where she was, he had established a desperate *liaison* with a fair maid whose aptitude for breakage had procured for her the *sobriquet* of Butter Fingers. Now, Butter Fingers, whose real name was Disher—Jane Disher—was a niece of our old friend, Big Ben, now a flourishing London hotel landlord, and Butter Fingers partook of the goodly properties and proportions for which the Ben family are distinguished. She was a little, plump, fair, round-about thing, with every quality of a healthy country beauty.

Fine Billy was first struck with her one Sunday afternoon, tripping along in Knightsbridge, as she was making her way home from Kensington Gardens, when the cheap finery—the parasol, the profusely-flowered white gauze bonnet, the veil, the machinery-laced cloak, the fringed kerchief, worked sleeves, &c., which she kept at Chicory the greengrocer's, in Sun Street, and changed there for the quiet apparel in which she left Mrs. Pringle's house in Curtain Crescent—completely deceived him; as much as did the half-starting smile of recognition she involuntarily gave him on meeting. Great was his surprise to find that such a smart, neat-stepping, well-set-up, *bien chaussée* beauty and he came from the same quarters. We need not say what followed: how Properjohn couldn't see what everybody else saw; and how at length poor Mrs. Pringle, having changed her mind about going to hear Mr. Spurgeon, caught the two sitting together, on her richly carved sofa of chaste design, in the then non-commissioned put-away drawing-room. There was Butter Fingers in a flounced book-muslin gown with a broad French sash, and her hair clubbed at the back *à la* crow's nest. It was hard to say which of the three got the greatest start, though the blow was undoubtedly the severest on the poor mother, who had looked forward to seeing

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her son entering the rank of life legitimately in which she had occupied a too questionable position. The worst of it was, she did not know what to do—whether to turn her out of the house at the moment, and so infuriate the uncle and her son also, or give her a good scolding, and get rid of her on the first plausible opportunity. She had no one to consult. She knew what “Want-nothin’-but-what’s-right Jerry” would say, and that nothing would please Mrs. Half-a-yard-of-the-table Joe more than to read the marriage of Billy and Butter Fingers.

Mrs. Pringle was afraid too of offending Big Ben by the abrupt dismissal of his niece, and dreaded if Butter Fingers had gained any ascendancy over William, that he too might find a convenient marrying place as somebody else had done.

Altogether our fair friend was terribly perplexed. Thrown on the natural resources of her own strong mind, she thought, perhaps, the usual way of getting young ladies off bad matches, by showing them something better, might be tried with her son. Billy’s *début* in the metropolis had not been so flattering as she could have wished, but then she could make allowances for town exclusiveness, and the pick and choice of dancing activity which old family connections and associations supplied. The country was very different; there young men were always in request, and were taken with much lighter credentials.

If, thought she, sweet William could but manage to establish a good country connection, there was no saying but he might retain it in town; at all events, the experiment would separate him from the artful Butter Fingers, and pave the way for her dismissal.

To accomplish this desirable object, Mrs. Pringle therefore devoted her undivided attention.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EARL OF LADYTHORNE.



The Earl of Ladythorne.

MONG Mrs. Pringle's many visitors was that gallant old philanthropist, the well-known Earl of Ladythorne, of Tantivy Castle, Featherbedfordshire, and Belvedere House, London. His lordship had known her at Lady

Delacey's, and Mrs. Pringle still wore and prized a ruby ring he slipped upon her finger as he met her (accidentally of course) in the passage early one morning as he was going to hunt. His saddle-horses might often be seen of a summer afternoon, tossing their heads up and down Curtain Crescent, to the amusement of the inhabitants of that locality. His lordship, indeed, was a well-known general patron

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of all that was fair and fine and handsome in creation: fine women, fine houses, fine horses, fine hounds, fine pictures, fine statues, fine everything. No pretty woman either in town or country ever wanted a friend if he was aware of it. He had long hunted Featherbedfordshire in a style of great magnificence, and though latterly his energies had perhaps been as much devoted to the pursuit of the fair as the fox, yet, as he found the two worked well together, he kept up the hunting establishment with all the splendour of his youth. Not that he was old; as he would say, "*far from it!*" Indeed, to walk behind him down St. James's Street (he does not go quite so well up) his easy jaunty air, tall graceful figure, and elasticity of step, might make him pass for a man in that most uncertain period of existence, the "prime of life," and if uncivil, unfriendly, inexorable time has whitened his pow, his lordship carries it off with the aid of gay costume and colour. He had a great reputation among the ladies, and though they all laughed and shook their heads when his name was mentioned, from the pretty simpering Mrs. Ringdove, of Lime-Tree Grove, who said he was a "naughty man," down to the buxom chambermaid of the Rose and Crown, who giggled and called him a "gay old gentleman," they all felt pleased and flattered by his attentions.

Hunting a country undoubtedly gives gay old gentlemen great opportunities, for, under pretence of finding a fox, they may rummage anywhere from the garret to the cellar.

Ex. gra., as we say in the classics.

"A FOX RUN INTO A LADY'S DRESSING-ROOM.

"The Heythrop hounds met at Ranger's Lodge, within about a mile of Charlbury, found in Hazell Wood, and went away through Great Cranwell, crossing the park of Cornbury, on by the old kennel to Five Oak, taking the side hill, leaving Leafield (so celebrated for clay-pipes) to his left, crossed the Bottom by Five Ashes; then turned to the right, through King's Wood, Smallstones, Knighton Copse, over the plain to Ranger's

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Lodge, with the hounds close at his brush, where they left him in a mysterious manner. After the lapse of a little time he was discovered by a maid-servant in the ladies' dressing-room, from which he immediately bolted on the appearance of the petticoats, without doing the slightest damage to person or property." What a gentlemanly fox!

In this interesting pursuit, his lordship was ably assisted by his huntsman, Dicky Boggledike. Better huntsmen there might be than Dicky, but none so eminently qualified for the double pursuit of the fox and the fine. He had a great deal of tact and manner, and looked and was essentially a nobleman's servant. He didn't come blurting open-mouthed with "I've seen a davigilish," for such was his dialect, "I've seen a davigilish fine 'oss, my lord," or "They say Mrs. Caudle's cow has gained another prize," but he would take an opportunity of introducing the subject neatly and delicately, through the medium of some allusion to the country in which they were to be found, some cover wanting cutting, some poacher wanting trouncing, or some puppy out at walk, so that if his lordship didn't seem to come into the humour of the thing, Dicky could whip off to the other scent as if he had nothing else in his mind. It was seldom, however, that his lordship was not inclined to profit by Dicky's experience, for he had great sources of information, and was very careful in his statements. His lordship and Dicky had now hunted Featherbedfordshire together for nearly forty years, and though they might not be so punctual in the mornings, or so late in leaving off in the evenings, as they were; and though his lordship might come to the meet in his carriage and four with the reigning favourite by his side, instead of on his neat cover hack, and though Dicky did dance longer at his fences than he used, still there was no diminution in the scale of the establishment, or in Dicky's influence throughout the country.

Indeed, it would rather seem as if the now well-matured hunt ran to show instead of sport, for each succeeding year brought out either another second horseman (though neither

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his lordship nor Dicky ever tired one), or another man in a scarlet and cap, or established another Rose and Crown, whereat his lordship kept dry things to change in case he got wet. He was uncommonly kind to himself, and hated his heir with an intensity of hatred which was at once the best chance for longevity and for sustaining the oft-disappointed ambitious hopes of the fair.

Now Mrs. Pringle had always had a very laudable admiration of fox-hunters. She thought the best introduction for a young man of fortune was at the cover side, and though Jerry Pringle (who looked upon them as synonymous) had always denounced "gamblin' and huntin'" as the two greatest vices of the day, she could never come in to that opinion, as far as hunting was concerned.

She now thought if she could get Billy launched under the auspices of that distinguished sportsman, the Earl of Ladythorne, it might be the means of reclaiming him from Butter Fingers, and getting him on in society, for she well knew how being seen at one good place led to another, just as the umbrella keepers at the Royal Academy try to lead people into giving them something in contravention of the rule above their heads, by jingling a few half-pence before their faces. Moreover, Billy had shown an inclination for equitation—by nearly galloping several of Mr. Spavin the neighbouring livery-stable-keeper's horses' tails off; and Mrs. Pringle's knowledge of hunting not being equal to her appreciation of the sport, she thought that a master of hounds found all the gentlemen who joined his hunt in horses, just as a shooter finds them in dogs or guns, so that the thing would be managed immediately.

Indeed, like many ladies, she had rather a confused idea of the whole thing, not knowing but that one horse would hunt every day in the week; or that there was any distinction of horses, further than the purposes to which they were applied. Hunters and race-horses she had no doubt were the same animals, working their ways honestly from year's end to year's end, or at most with only the sort of difference between them

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that there is between a milliner and a dressmaker. Be that as it may, however, all things considered, Mrs. Pringle determined to test the sincerity of her friend the Earl of Ladythorne: and to that end wrote him a gossiping sort of letter, asking, in the postscript, when his dogs would be going out, as her son was at home and would "*so like*" to see them.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS DE GLANCEY.



ALTHOUGH we introduced Lord Ladythorne as a philanthropist, his philanthropy, we should add, was rather lop-sided, being chiefly confined to the fair. Indeed, he could better stand a dozen women than one man. He had no taste or sympathy for the hirsute tribe, hence his fields were very select, being chiefly composed of his dependents and people whom he could d— and do what he liked with. Though the Crumpleton Railway cut right through his country, making it “varry contagious,” as Harry Swan, his first whip, said, for sundry large towns, the sporting inhabitants thereof preferred the money-gripping propensities of a certain Baronet—Sir Moses Mainchance—whose acquaintance the reader will presently make, to the scot-free sport with the frigid civilities of the noble Earl. Under ordinary circumstances, therefore, Mrs. Pringle had made rather an unfortunate selection for her son’s *début*, but it so happened that her letter found the Earl in anything but his usual frame of mind.

He was suffering most acutely for the hundred and twentieth time or so from one of Cupid’s shafts, and that, too, levelled by a hand against whose attacks he had always hitherto been thought impervious. This wound had been inflicted by the well-known—perhaps to some of our readers too well-known—equestrian coquette, Miss de Glancey of Half-the-watering-places-in-England-and-some-on-the-Continent, whose many conquests had caused her to be regarded as almost irresistible,

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and induced, it was said—with what degree of truth we know not—a party of England's enterprising sons to fit her out for an expedition against the gallant Earl of Ladythorne under the Limited Liability Act.

Now, none but a most accomplished, self-sufficient coquette, such as Miss de Glancey undoubtedly was, would have undertaken such an enterprise, for it was in direct contravention of two of the noble Earl's leading principles, namely, that of liking large ladies (fine, coarse women, as the slim ones call them), and of disliking fox-hunting ones, the sofa and not the saddle being, as he always said, the proper place for the ladies ; but Miss de Glancey prided herself upon her power of subjugating the tyrant man, and gladly undertook to couch the lance of blandishment against the hitherto impracticable nobleman. In order, however, to understand the exact position of parties, perhaps the reader will allow us to show how his lordship came to be seized with his present attack, and also how he treated it.

Well, the ash was yellow, the beech was brown, and the oak ginger-coloured, and the indomitable youth was again in cub-hunting costume—a white beaver hat, a green cut-away, a buff vest, with white cords and caps, attended by Boggledike and his whips in hats, and their last season's pinks or purples, disturbing the numerous litters of cubs with which the country abounded, when, after a musical twenty minutes with a kill in Allonby Wood, his lordship joined horses with Dicky, to discuss the merits of the performance, as they rode home together.

“Yas, my lord, yas,” replied Dicky, sawing away at his hat, in reply to his lordship's observation that they ran uncommonly well ; “yas, my lord, they did. I don't know that I can ever remamber bein' better pleased with an entry than I am with this year's. I really think in a few more seasons we shall get 'em as near perfection as possible. Did your lordship notish that Barbara betch, how she took to runnin' to-day ? The first time she has left my 'oss's 'eels. Her mother, old Blossom, was jest the same. Never left my 'oss's 'eels the first season, and everybody said she was fit for nothin' but the halter ; but

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my!" continued he, shaking his head, "what a rare betch she did become."

"She did that," replied his lordship, smiling at Dicky's pronunciation.

"And that reminds me," continued Dicky, emboldened by what he thought the encouragement, "I was down at Freestone Banks yasterday, where Barbara was walked, a-seein' a pup I have there now, and I think I seed the very neatest lady's pad I ever set eyes on!"—Dicky's light-blue eyes settling on his lordship's eagle ones as he spoke.

"Aye! whose was that?" asked the gay old gentleman, catching at the word "lady."

"Why, they say she belongs to a young lady from the south—a Miss Dedancey, I think they call her," with the aptitude people have for mistaking proper names.

"Dedancey," repeated his lordship, "Dedancey; never heard of the name before—what's set her here?"

"She's styin' at Mrs. Roseworth's, at Lanecroft House, but her 'osses stand at the Spread Heagle, at Bush Hill—Old Sam 'Utchison's, you know."

Indomitable Youth.—"Horses! what, has she more than one?"

Dicky.—"Two, a bay and a gray—it's the bay that takes my fancy most:—the neatest stepper, with the lightest mouth, and fairest, freest, truest action I ever seed."

Indomitable Youth.—"What's she going to do with them?"

Dicky.—"Ride them, ride them! They say she's the finest 'osswoman that ever was seen."

"In-deed," mused his lordship, thinking over the *pros* and *cons* of female equestrianism—the disagreeableness of being beat by them—the disagreeableness of having to leave them in the lurch—the disagreeableness of seeing them floored—the disagreeableness of seeing them all running down with perspiration;—the result being that his lordship adhered to his established opinion that women have no business out hunting.

Dicky knew his lordship's sentiments, and did not press the matter, but drew his horse a little to the rear, thinking it fortunate that all men are not of the same way of thinking. Thus

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they rode on for some distance in silence, broken only by the occasional flopping and chiding of Harry Swan or his brother whip of some loitering or refractory hound. His lordship had a great opinion of Dicky's judgment, and though they might not always agree in their views, he never damped Dicky's ardour by openly differing with him. He thought by Dicky's way of mentioning the lady that he had a good opinion of her, and, barring the riding, his lordship saw no reason why he should not have a good opinion of her too. Taking advantage of the Linton side-bar now bringing them upon the Somerton-Longville road, he reined in his horse a little so as to let Dicky come alongside of him again.

"What is this young lady like?" asked the indomitable youth, as soon as they got their horses to step pleasantly together again.

"Well now," replied Dicky, screwing up his mouth, with an apologetic touch of his hat, knowing that that was his weak point, "well now, I don't mean to say that she's zactly—no, not zactly your lordship's model,—not a large full-bodied woman like Mrs. Blissland or Miss Peach, but an elegant, *very* elegant, well-set-up young lady, with a high-bred hair about her that one seldom sees in the country, for though we breeds our women very beautiful—uncommon 'andsome, I may say—we don't polish them hup to that fine degree of perfection that they do in the towns, and even if we did they would most likely spoil the 'ole thing by some untoward unsightly dress, jest as a country servant spoils a London livery by a coloured tic, or goin' about with a great shock head of 'air, or some such disfigurement; but this young lady, to my mind, is a perfect pictor, self, 'oss, and seat—all as neat and perfect as can be, and nothing that one could either halter or amend. She is what, savin' your lordship's presence, I might call the 'pink of fashion and the mould of form!'"—Dicky sawing away at his hat as he spoke.

"Tall, slim, and genteel, I suppose," observed his lordship drily.

"Jest so," assented Dicky, with a chuck of the chin, making

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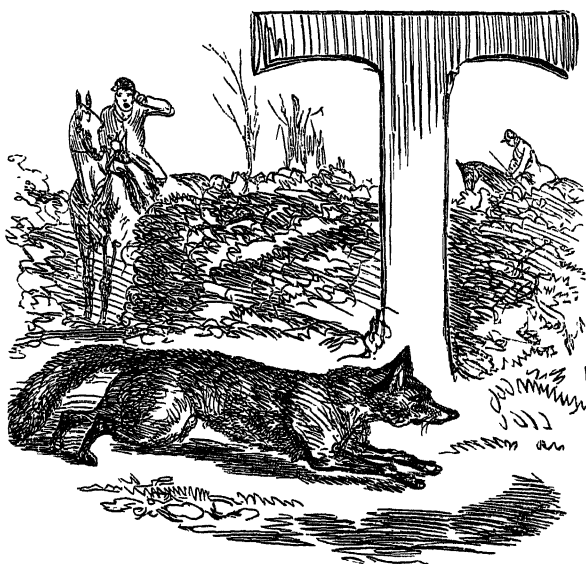
a clean breast of it, "jest so;" adding, "at least as far as one can judge of her in her 'abit, you know."

"Thought so," muttered his lordship.

And having now gained one of the doors in the wall, they cut across the deer-studded park, and were presently back at the Castle. And his lordship ate his dinner, and quaffed his sweet and dry and twenty-five Lafitte without ever thinking about either the horse, or the lady, or the habit, or anything connected with the foregoing conversation, while the reigning favourite, Mrs. Moffatt, appeared just as handsome as could be in his eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

CUB-HUNTING.



“There he goes!”

HOUGH his lordship, as we said before, would stoutly deny being old, he had nevertheless got sufficiently through the morning of life not to let cub-hunting get him out of bed a moment sooner than usual, and it

was twelve o'clock on the next day but one to that on which the foregoing conversation took place, that Mr. Boggledike was again to be seen standing erect in his stirrups, yoiking and coaxing his hounds into Crashington Gorse. There was Dicky, cap-in-hand, in the centre ride, exhorting the young hounds to dive into the strong sea of gorse. “Y-o-o-icks! wind him! y-o-o-icks! pash him up!” cheered the veteran, now turning his horse across to enforce the request. There was his lordship at the high corner as usual, ensconced among the clump of weather-beaten black-

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thorns—thorns that had neither advanced nor receded a single inch since he first knew them—his eagle eye fixed on the narrow fern and coarse grass-covered dell down which Reynard generally stole. There was Harry Swan at one corner to head the fox back from the beans, and Tom Speed at the other to welcome him away over the corn-garnered open. And now the whimper of old sure-finding Harbinger, backed by the sharp “yap” of the terrier, proclaims that our friend is at home, and presently a perfect hurricane of melody bursts from the agitated gorse—every hound is in the paroxysm of excitement, and there are five-and-twenty couple of them, fifty musicians in the whole !

“*Tally-ho !* there he goes across the ride !”

“*Cub !*” cries his lordship.

“*Cub !*” responded Dicky.

“*Crack !*” sounds the whip.

Now the whole infuriated phalanx dashed across the ride and dived into the close prickly gorse on the other side, as if it were the softest, pleasantest quarters in the world. There is no occasion to coax, and exhort, and ride cap-in-hand to them now. It's all fury and commotion. Each hound seems to consider himself personally aggrieved — though we will be bound to say the fox and he never met in their lives—and to be bent upon having immediate satisfaction. And immediate, any tyro would think it must necessarily be, seeing such preponderating influence brought to bear upon so small an animal. Not so, however : pug holds his own ; and, by dint of creeping, and crawling, and stopping, and listening, and lying down, and running his foil, he brings the lately rushing, clamorous pack to a more plodding, pains-taking, unravelling sort of performance.

Meanwhile three foxes in succession slip away, one at Speed's corner, two at Swan's ; and though Speed screeched, and screamed, and yelled, as if he were getting killed, not a hound came to see what had happened. They all stuck to the original scent.

“Here he comes again !” now cries his lordship from his thorn-formed bower, as the cool-mannered fox again steals

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across the ride, and Dicky again uncovers, and goes through the capping ceremony. Over come the pack, bristling and lashing for blood—each hound looking as if he would eat the fox single-handed. Now he's up to the high corner, as though he were going to charge his lordship himself, and passing over fresh ground the hounds get the benefit of a scent, and work with redoubled energy, making the opener gorse bushes crack and bend with their pressure. Pug has now gained the rabbit-burrowed bank of the north fence, and has about made up his mind to follow the example of his comrades, and try his luck in the open, when a cannonading crack of Swan's whip strikes terror into his heart, and causes him to turn tail, and run the moss-grown mound of the hedge. Here he unexpectedly meets young Prodigal face to face, who, thinking that rabbit may be as good eating as fox, has got up a little hunt of his own, and who is considerably put out of countenance by the *rencontre*; but pug, not anticipating any such delicacy on the part of a pursuer, turns tail, and is very soon in the rear of the hounds, hunting them instead of their hunting him. The thing then becomes more difficult, business-like, and sedate—the sages of the pack taking upon them to guide the energy of the young. So what with the slow music of the hounds, the yap, yap, yapping of the terriers, and the shaking of the gorse, an invisible underground sort of hunt is maintained—his lordship sitting among his blackthorn bushes like a gentleman in his opera-stall, thinking now of the hunt, now of his dinner, now of what a good thing it was to be a lord, with a good digestion and plenty of cash, and nobody to comb his head.

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At length pug finds it too hot to hold him. The rays of an autumnal sun have long been striking into the gorse, while a warm westerly wind does little to ventilate it from the steam of the rummaging inquisitive pack. Though but a cub, he is the son of an old stager, who took Dicky and his lordship a deal of killing, and with the talent of his sire, he thus ruminates on his uncomfortable condition.

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“If,” says he, “I stay here, I shall either be smothered or fall a prey to these noisy unrelenting monsters, who seem to have the knack of finding me wherever I go. I’d better cut my stick as I did the time before, and have fresh air and exercise at all events, in the open :” so saying, he made a dash at the hedge near where Swan was stationed, and regardless of his screams and the cracks of his whip, cut through the beans and went away, with a sort of defiant whisk of his brush.

What a commotion followed his departure ! How the screeches of the men mingled with the screams of the hounds and the twangs of the horn ! In an instant his lordship vacates his opera-stall, and is flying over the rugged boundary fence that separates him from the beans ; while Mr. Boggledike capers and prances at a much smaller place, looking as if he would fain turn away were it not for the observation of the men. Now Dicky is over ! Swan and Speed take it in their stride, just as the last hound leaves the gorse and strains to regain his distant companions. A large grass field, followed by a rough bare fallow, takes the remaining strength out of poor pug ; and, turning short to the left, he seeks the friendless shelter of a patch of wretched oats. The hounds overrun the scent, but, spreading like a rocket, they quickly recover it ; and in an instant, fox, hounds, horses, men, are among the standing corn—one ring in final destruction of the beggarly crop, and poor pug is in the hands of his pursuers. Then came the grand *finale*, the *who hoop* ! the baying, the blowing, the beheading, &c. Now Harry Swan, whose province it is to magnify sport and make imaginary runs to ground, exercises his calling, by declaring it was five-and-thirty minutes (twenty perhaps), and the finest young fox he ever had hold of. Now his lordship and Dicky take out their *tootlers* and blow a shrill reverberating blast ; while Swan stands straddling and yelling, with the mangled remains high above his head, ready to throw it into the sea of mouths that are baying around to receive it. After a sufficiency of noise, up goes the carcase ; the wave of hounds breaks against it as it falls, while a half-ravenous, half-indignant, growling worry succeeds the late clamorous outcry.

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“Tear ‘im and heat ‘im!” cries Dicky.

“Tear ‘im and eat ‘im!” shouts his lordship.

“Tear ‘im and eat ‘im!” shrieks Speed.

“*Hie, worry! worry! worry!*” shouts Swan, trying to tantalize the young hounds with a haunch, which, however, they do not seem much to care about.

The old hounds, too, seem as if they had lost their hunger with their anger; and Marmion lets Warrior run off with his leg with only a snap and an indignant rise of his bristles.

Altogether the froth and effervescence of the thing has evaporated; so his lordship and Dicky turning their horses’ heads, the watchful hounds give a bay of obedient delight as they frolic under their noses; and Swan having reclaimed his horse from Speed, the onward procession is formed to give Brambleton Wood a rattle by way of closing the performance of the day.

His lordship and Dicky ride side by side, extolling the merits of the pack and the excellence of Crashington Gorse. Never was so good a cover. Never was a better pack. Mainchance’s! *pooh!* Not to be mentioned in the same century. So they proceed, magnifying and complimenting themselves in the handsomest terms possible, down Daisyfield Lane, across Hill House pastures, and on by Duston Mills to Broomley, which is close to Brambleton Wood.

Most of our Featherbedfordshire friends will remember that after leaving Duston Mills the road winds along the impetuous Lune, whose thorn and broom-grown banks offer dry, if not very secure, accommodation for Master Reynard; and the draw being pretty, and the echo fine, his lordship thought they might as well run the hounds along the banks, not being aware that Peter Hitter, Squire Porker’s keeper, had just emerged at the east end as they came up at the west. However, that was neither here nor there, Dicky got his *y-o-o-icks*, his lordship got his view, Swan and Speed their cracks and canters, and it was all in the day’s work. No fox, of course, was the result. “*Tweet, tweet, tweet,*” went the horns, his lordship taking a blow as well as Dicky, which sounded up the valley and lost itself among



“HIE, WORRY ! WORRY !”

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the distant hills. The hounds came straggling leisurely out of cover, as much as to say, "You know there never *is* a fox there, so why bother us?"

All hands being again united, the cavalcade rose the hill, and were presently on the Longford and Aldenbury turnpike. Here the Featherbedfordshire reader's local knowledge will again remind him that the Chaddleworth lane crosses the turnpike at right angles, and just as old Ringwood, who, as usual, was trotting consequentially in advance of the pack, with the fox's head in his mouth, got to the finger-post, a fair equestrian on a tall blood bay rode leisurely past with downcast eyes in full view of the advancing party. Though her horse whinnied and shied, and seemed inclined to be sociable, she took no more notice of the cause than if it had been a cart, merely coaxing and patting him with her delicate primrose-coloured kid gloves. So she got him past without even a sidelong look from herself.

But though she did not look, my lord did, and was much struck with the air and elegance of everything—her mild classic features—her black-felt, Queen's-patterned wide-awake, trimmed with lightish-green velvet, and green cock-feathered plume, tipped with straw-colour to match the ribbon that now gently fluttered at her fair neck—her hair, her whip, her gloves, her *tout ensemble*. Her lightish-green habit was the quintessence of a fit, and altogether there was a high-bred finish about her that looked more like Hyde Park than what one usually sees in the country.

"Who the deuce is that, Dicky?" asked his lordship, as she now got out of hearing.

"That be *her*, my lord," whispered Dicky, sawing away at his hat. "That be *her*," repeated he, with a knowing leer.

"*Her!* who d'ye mean?" asked his lordship, who had forgotten all Dicky's preamble.

"Well, — Miss — Miss — What's her name — Dedancey, Dedancey—the lady I told you about."

And the Earl's heart smote him, for he felt that he had done injustice to Dicky, and moreover, had persevered too long in his admiration of large ladies, and in his repudiation of horse-



Miss De Glancey captures the Earl.

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manship. He thought he had never seen such a graceful seat, or such a piece of symmetrical elegance before, and inwardly resolved to make Dicky a most surprising present at Christmas, for he went on the principle of giving low wages, and of rewarding zeal and discretion, such as Dicky's, profusely. And though he went and drew Brambleton Wood, he was thinking far more of the fair maid, her pensive, downcast look, her long eyelashes, her light silken hair, her graceful figure, and exquisite seat, than of finding a fox; and he was not at all sorry when he heard Dicky's horn at the bridle-gate at the Ashburne end blowing the hounds out of cover. They then went home, and his lordship was very grumpy all that evening with his fat-fair-and-forty friend, Mrs. Moffatt, who could not get his tea to his liking at all.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PUP AT WALK.



E daresay most of our readers will agree with us, that when a couple want to be acquainted there is seldom much difficulty about the matter, even though there be no friendly go-between to mutter the cabalistic words that constitute an introduction; and though Miss de Glancey did ride so unconcernedly past, it was a sheer piece of acting, as she had long been waiting at Carlton Clumps, which commands a view over the surrounding country, timing herself for the exact spot where she met the too susceptible Earl and his hounds.

No one knew better how to angle for admiration than this renowned young lady—when to do the bold—when the bashful—when the timid—when the scornful and retiring, and she rightly calculated that the way to attract and win the young old Earl was to look as if she didn't want to have anything to say to him. Her downcast look, and utter indifference to that fertile source of introduction, a pack of hounds, had sunk deeper into his tender heart than if she had pulled up to admire them collectively, and to kiss them individually. We all know how useful a dog can be made in matters of this sort—how the fair creatures can express their feelings by their fondness. And if one dog can be so convenient, by how much more so can a whole pack of hounds be made!

Next day his lordship, who was of the nice old Anglesey school of dressers, was to be seen in regular St. James's Street attire, viz. a bright blue coat with gilt buttons, a light blue

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scarf, a buff vest, with fawn-coloured leathers, and brass heel-spurs, capering on a long-tailed silver dun, attended by a diminutive rosy-cheeked boy—known in the stables as Cupid-without-Wings—on a bay.

He was going to see a pup he had at walk at Freestone Banks, of which the reader will remember Dicky had spoken approvingly on a previous day ; and the morning being fine and sunny, his lordship took the bridle-road over Ashley Downs, and along the range of undulating Heathmoor Hills, as well for the purpose of enjoying the breeze as of seeing what was passing in the vale below. So he tit-up'd and tit-up'd away, over the sound green sward, on his flowing-tailed steed, his keen far-seeing eye raking all the roads as he went. There seemed to be nothing stirring but heavy crushing waggons, with doctors' gigs and country carts, and here and there a slow-moving steed of the grand order of agriculture.

When, however, he got to the broken stony ground where all the independent hill tracks join in common union to effect the descent into the vale, his hack pricked his ears, and looking ahead to the turn of the lane into which the tracks ultimately resolved themselves, his lordship first saw a fluttering, light-tipped feather, and then the whole figure of a horsewoman, emerge from the concealing hedge as it were on to the open space beyond. Miss, too, had been on the hills, as the Earl might have seen by her horse's imprints, if he had not been too busy looking abroad ; and she had just had time to effect the descent as he approached. She was now sauntering along as unconcernedly as if there was nought but herself and her horse in the world. His lordship started when he saw her, and a crimson flush suffused his healthy cheeks as he drew his reins, and felt his hack gently with his spur to induce him to use a little more expedition down the hill. Cupid-without-Wings put on also, to open the rickety gate at the bottom, and his lordship telling him, as he passed through, to "shut it gently," pressed on at a well-in-hand trot, which he could ease down to a walk as he came near the object of his pursuit. Miss's horse heard footsteps coming and looked round, but she pursued the

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even tenour of her way apparently indifferent to everything—even to a garotting. His lordship, however, was not to be daunted by any such coolness; so stealing quietly alongside of her, he raised his hat respectfully, and asked, in his mildest, blandest tone, if she had “seen a man with a hound in a string?”

“*Hound! me! see!*” exclaimed Miss de Glancey, with a well feigned start of astonishment. “*No, sir, I have not,*” continued she haughtily, as if recovering herself, and offended by the inquiry.

“I’m afraid my hounds startled your horse the other day,” observed his lordship, half inclined to think she didn’t know him.

“Oh, no, they didn’t,” replied she, with an upward curl of her pretty lip; “my horse is not so easily startled as that; are you, Cock Robin?” asked she, leaning forward to pat him.

Cock Robin replied by laying back his ears, and taking a snatch at his lordship’s hack’s silver mane, which afforded him an opportunity of observing that Cock Robin was not very sociable.

“*Not with strangers,*” pouted Miss de Glancey, with a flash of her bright hazel eyes. So saying, she touched her horse lightly with her gold-mounted whip, and in an instant she was careering away, leaving his lordship to the care of the now grinning Cupid-without-Wings.

And thus the mynxx held the sprightly youth in tow, till she nearly drove him mad, not missing any opportunity of meeting him, but never giving him too much of her company, and always pouting at the suggestion of *her* marrying a “*mere fox-hunter.*” The whole thing, of course, furnished conversation for the gossips, and Mr. Boggledike, as in duty bound, reported what he heard. She puzzled his lordship more than any lady he had ever had to do with, and though he often resolved to strike and be free, he had only to meet her again to go home more subjugated than ever. And so what between Miss de Glancey out of doors and Mrs. Moffatt in, he began to have a very unpleasant time of it. His hat had so long covered his family, that he hardly knew how to set about obtaining his own



MISS DE GLANCEY AND HIS LORDSHIP.

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consent to marry; and yet he felt that he ought to marry if it was only to spite his odious heir—*old* General Binks; for his lordship called him old though the General was ten years younger than himself; but still he would like to look about him a little longer. What he would now wish to do would be to keep Miss de Glancey in the country, for he felt interested in her, and thought she would be ornamental to the pack. Moreover, he liked all that was handsome, *piquant*, and gay, and to be joked about the Featherbedfordshire witches when he went to town. So he resolved himself into a committee of ways and means, to consider how the object was to be effected, without surrendering himself. That must be the last resource, at all events, thought he.

CHAPTER XVII.

IMPERIAL JOHN.



OW upon his lordship's vast estates was a most unmitigated blockhead called Imperial John, from his growing one of those chin appendages. His real name was Hybrid—John Hybrid, of Barley Hill Farm; but his handsome sister, "Imperial Jane," as the wags called her, having attracted his lordship's attention, to the danger as it was thought of old Binks, on leaving her furnishing seminary at Turnham Green, John had been taken by the hand, which caused him to lose his head, and make him set up for what he called "a gent." He built a lodge and a portico to Barley Hill Farm, rough cast, and put a blue roof on to the house, and then advertised in the "*Featherbedfordshire Gazette*," that letters and papers were for the future to be addressed to John Hybrid, Esquire, Barley Hill Hall, and not Farm as they had hitherto been. And having done so much for the place, John next revised his own person, which, though not unsightly, was coarse, and a long way off looking anything like that of a gentleman. He first started the imperial aforesaid, and not being laughed at as much as he expected for that, he was emboldened to order a red coat for the then approaching season. Mounting the pink is a critical thing, for if a man does not land in the front rank they will not admit him again into the rear, and he remains a sort of red bat for the rest of his life,—neither a gentleman nor a farmer.

John, however, feeling that he had his lordship's countenance, went boldly at it, and the first day of the season before that with

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which we are dealing, found him with his stomach buttoned consequentially up in a spic and span scarlet with fancy buttons, looking as bumptious as a man with a large balance at his banker's. He sat bolt upright, holding his whip like a field-marshal's bâton, on his ill-groomed horse, with a tight-bearing rein chucking the imperial chin well in the air, and a sort of half-defiant "you'd better not laugh at me" look. And John was always proud to break a fence, or turn a hound, or hold a horse, or do anything his lordship bid him, and became a sort of hunting aide-de-camp to the great man. He was a boasting, bragging fool, always talking about m-o-y hall, and m-o-y lodge, and m-o-y plate in m-o-y drawing-room, for he had not discovered that plate was the appendage of a dining-room, and altogether he was very magnificent.

Imperial Jane kept old Binks on the fret for some time, until another of his lordship's tenants, young Fred Poppyfield, becoming enamoured of her charms, and perhaps wishing to ride in scarlet too, sought her fair hand, whereupon his lordship, acting with his usual munificence, set them up on a farm at so low a rent that it acquired the name of Gift Hall Farm. This arrangement set Barley Hall free so far as the petticoats were concerned, and his lordship little knowing how well she was "up" in the country, thought this great gouk of a farmer, with his plate in his drawing-room, might come over the accomplished Miss de Glancey,—the lady who sneered at himself as "a mere fox-hunter." And the wicked monkey favoured the delusion, which she saw through the moment his lordship brought the pompous egotist up at Newington Gorse, and begged to be allowed to introduce his friend, Mr. Hybrid, and she inwardly resolved to give Mr. Hybrid a benefit. Forsaking his lordship therefore entirely, she put forth her most seductive allurements at Imperial John, talked most amazingly to him, rode over whatever he recommended, and seemed quite smitten with him.

And John, who used to boast that somehow the "gals couldn't withstand him," was so satisfied with his success, that he presently blundered out an offer, when Miss de Glancey, having led him out to the extreme length of his tether, gave such a start

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and shudder of astonishment as Fanny Kemble, or Mrs. Siddons herself, might have envied.

"O, Mr. Hybrid! O, Mr. Hybrid!" gasped she, opening wide her intelligent eyes, as if she had but just discovered his meaning. "O, Mr. Hybrid!" exclaimed she for the third time, "*you—you—you,*" and turning aside as if to conceal her emotion, she buried her face in her lace-fringed, richly-cyphered kerchief.

John, who was rather put out by some women who were watching him from the adjoining turnip-field, construing all this into the usual misfortune of the ladies not being able to withstand him, returned to the charge as soon as he got out of their hearing, when he was suddenly brought up by such a withering "*Si-r-r-r! do you mean to insult me?*" coupled with a look that nearly started the basket-buttons of his green cut-away, and convinced him that Miss de Glancey, at all events, could withstand him. So his Majesty slunk off, consoling himself with the reflection, that riding-habits covered a multitude of sins, and that if he was not much mistaken, she would want a deal of oil-cake, or cod-liver oil, or summut o' that sort, afore she was fit to show.

And the next time Miss met my lord (which, of course, she did by accident), she pouted and frowned at the "mere fox-hunter," and intimated her intention of leaving the country—going home to her mamma, in fact.

It was just at this juncture that Mrs. Pringle's letter arrived, and his lordship's mind being distracted between love on his own account, dread of matrimony, and dislike of old Binks, he caught at what he would in general have stormed at, and wrote to say that he should begin hunting the first Monday in November, and if Mrs. Pringle's son would come down a day or two before he would "put him up" (which meant mount him), and "do for him" (which meant board and lodge him), all, in fact, that Mrs. Pringle could desire. And his lordship inwardly hoped that Mr. Pringle might be more to Miss de Glancey's liking than his Imperial Highness had proved. At all events, he felt it was but a simple act of justice to himself to try. Let us now return to Curtain Crescent.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JEAN ROUGIER, OR JACK ROGERS.



WE need not say that Mrs. Pringle was overjoyed at the receipt of the Earl's letter. It was so kind and good, and so like him. He always said he would do her a good turn if he could; but there are so many fine-weather friends in this world that there is no being certain of any one. Happy are they who never have occasion to test the sincerity of their friends, say we.

Mrs. Pringle was now all bustle and excitement, preparing Billy for the great event.

His wardrobe, always grand, underwent revision in the undergarment line. She got him some magnificently embroidered dress shirts, so fine that the fronts almost looked as if you might blow them out, and regardless of the *rôle* he was now about to play, she added several dozen with horses, dogs, birds, and foxes upon them, "suitable for fishing, shooting, boating, &c.," as the advertisements said. His cambric kerchiefs were of the finest quality, while his stockings and other things were in great abundance, the whole surmounted by a splendid dressing-case, the like of which had ne'er been seen since the days of Pea-Green Haine. Altogether he was capitally provided, and quite in accordance with a lady's-maid's ideas of gentility.

Billy, on his part, was active and energetic too, for though he had his doubts about being able to sit at the jumps, he had no objection to wear a red coat; and mysterious-looking boys, with blue bags, were constantly to be found seated on the mahogany bench, in the Curtain Crescent passage, waiting



BILLY PRINGLE.

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to try on his top boots ; while the cheval glass upstairs was constantly reflecting his figure in scarlet *à la* Old Briggs. The concomitants of the chase, leathers, cords, whips, spurs, came pouring in apace. The next thing was to get somebody to take care of them.

It is observable that the heads of the various branches of an establishment are all in favour of "master" spending all his money on their particular department. Thus, the coachman would have him run entirely to carriages, the groom to horses, the cook to the *cuisine*, the butler to wines, the gardener to grapes, &c., and so on.

Mrs. Pringle, we need hardly say, favoured ladies'-maids and valets. It has been well said, that if a man wants to get acquainted with a gentleman's private affairs, he should either go to the lawyer or else to the valet that's courting the lady's-maid ; and Mrs. Pringle was quite of that opinion. Moreover, she held that no man with an efficient, properly trained valet, need ever be catspawed or jilted, because the lady's-maid would feel it a point of honour to let the valet know how the land lay, a compliment he would return under similar circumstances. To provide Billy with this, as she considered, most essential appendage to a gentleman, was her next consideration—a valet that should know enough and not too much—enough to enable him to blow his master's trumpet properly, and not too much, lest he should turn restive and play the wrong tune.

At length she fixed upon the Anglo-Frenchman, whose name stands at the head of this chapter—Jean Rougier, or Jack Rogers. Jack was the son of old Jack Rogers, so well known as the enacter of the Drunken Huzzar, and similar characters of Nutkins's Circus ; and Jack was entered to his father's profession, but disagreeing with the clown, Tom Oliver, who used to give him sundry most unqualified cuts and cuffs in the Circus, Jack, who was a tremendously strong fellow, gave Oliver such a desperate beating one night as caused his life to be despaired of. This took place at Nottingham, from whence Jack fled for fear of the consequences ; and after sundry vicissitudes he was next discovered as a post-boy, at Sittingbourne, an office that he was

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well adapted for, being short and stout and extremely powerful. No brute was ever too bad for Jack's riding; he would tame them before the day was over. Somehow he got bumped down to Dover, when taking a fancy to go "foreign," he sold his master's horses for what they would fetch; and this being just about the time that the late Mr. Probert expiated a similar mistake at the Old Bailey, Jack hearing of it, thought it was better to stay where he was than give Mr. Calcraft any trouble. He therefore accepted the situation of boots to the Albion Hotel, Boulogne-sur-mer; but finding that he did not get on half so well as he would if he were a Frenchman, he took to acquiring the language, which, with getting his ears bored, letting his hair and whiskers grow, and adopting the French costume in all its integrity, coupled with a liberal attack of the small-pox, soon told a tale in favour of his fees. After a long absence, he at length returned at the Bill Smith revolution; and vacillating for some time between a courier and a valet, finally settled down to what we now find him.

We know not how it is, if valets are so essentially necessary, that there should always be so many out of place, but certain it is that an advertisement in a morning paper will always bring a full crop to a door.

Perhaps, being the laziest of all lazy lives, any one can turn his hand to valeting, who to dig is unable, and yet to want is unwilling.

Mrs. Pringle knew better than hold a levée in Curtain Crescent, letting all the applicants pump Properjohn or such of the maids as they could get hold of; and having advertised for written applications, stating full particulars of previous service, and credentials, to be addressed to E. P. at Chisel the baker's, in Yeast Street, she selected some half-dozen of the most promising ones, and appointed the parties to meet her, at different hours of course, at the first-class waiting-room of the Great Western Station, intimating that they would know her by a bunch of red geraniums she would hold in her hand. And the second applicant, Jean Rougier, looked so like her money, having a sufficient knowledge of the English language to be

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able to understand all that was said, and yet at the same time sufficiently ignorant of it to invite confidential communications to be made before him; that after glancing over the testimonials bound up in his little parchment-backed passport book, she got the name and address of his then master, and sought an interview to obtain Monsieur's character. This gentleman, Sir Harry Bolter, happening to owe Jack three-quarters of a year's wages, which he was not likely to pay, spoke of him in the highest possible terms, glossing over his little partiality for drink by saying that, like all Frenchmen, he was of a convivial turn; and in consequence of Sir Harry's and Jack's own recommendations, Mrs. Pringle took him.

The reader will therefore now have the kindness to consider our hero and his valet under way, with a perfect pyramid of luggage, and Monsieur arrayed in the foraging cap, the little coatee, the petticoat trowsers, and odds and ends money-bag of his long adopted country, slung across his ample chest.

Their arrival and reception at Tantivy Castle will perhaps be best described in the following letter from Billy to his mother:—

“TANTIVY CASTLE

“MY DEAREST MAMMA,

“I write a line to say that I arrived here quite safe by the 5.30 train, and found the Earl as polite as possible. I should tell you that I made a mistake at starting, for it being dark when I arrived, and getting confused with a whole regiment of footmen, I mistook a fine gentleman who came forward to meet me for the Earl, and made him a most respectful bow, which the ass returned, and began to talk about the weather; and when the real Earl came in I took him for a guest, and was going to weather him. However he soon put all matters right, and introduced me to Mrs. Moffatt, a very fine lady, who seems to rule the roast here in grand style. They say she never wears the same dress twice.

“There are always at least half-a-dozen powdered footmen, in cerulean blue lined with rose-coloured silk, and pink silk stockings, the whole profusely illustrated with gold lace, gold aigulets,

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and I don't know what, lounging about in the halls and passages, waiting for company which Rougier says never comes. This worthy seems to have mastered the ins and outs of the place already, and says, 'my lor' has an Englishman to cook his beef-steak for breakfast, a Frenchman to cook his dinner, and an Italian confectioner; every thing that a my lord ought to have.' It is a splendid place,—as you will see by the above picture,* more like Windsor than any thing I ever saw, and there seems to be no expense spared that could by any possibility be incurred. I've got a beautiful bedroom with warm and cold baths and a conservatory attached.

"To-morrow is the first day of the season, and all the world and his wife will be there to a grand *déjeûner à la Fourchette*. The hounds meet before the Castle. His lordship says he will put me on a safe, steady hunter, and I hope he will, for I am not quite sure that I can sit at the jumps. However, I'll let you know how I come on. Meanwhile as the gong is sounding for dressing, believe me, my dearest mamma,

"Ever your truly affectionate son,

"WM. PRINGLE.

"MRS PRINGLE,

"CURTAIN CRESCENT,

"BELGRAVE SQUARE,

"LONDON."

* Our friend was writing on Castle paper, of course.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OPENING DAY.



EVERSING the usual order of things, each first Monday in November saw the sporting inmates of Tantivy Castle emerge from the chrysalis into the butterfly state of existence. His lordship's green-duck hunter and drab caps disappeared, and were succeeded by a spic-and-span new scarlet, and white tops; Mr. Boggledike's last year's pink was replaced by a new one, his hat was succeeded by a cap; and the same luck attended the garments of both Swan and Speed. The stud-groom, the pad-groom, the sending-on groom, all the grooms down to our little friend, Cupid-without-Wings, underwent renovation in their outward men. The whole place smelt of leather and new cloth. The Castle itself on this occasion seemed to participate in the general festivity, for a bright sun emblazoned the quarterings of the gaily flaunting flag, lit up the glittering vanes of the lower towers, and burnished the modest ivy of the basements. Everything was bright and sunny, and though Dicky Boggledike did not "zactly like" the red sunrise, he "'oped the rine might keep off until they were done, 'specially as it was a show day." Very showy indeed it was, for all the gentlemen out of livery,—those strange puzzlers—were in full ball costume; while the standard footmen strutted like peacocks in their rich blue liveries with rose-coloured linings, and enormous bouquets under their noses, feeling that for once they were going to have something to do.

The noble Earl, having got himself up most elaborately in

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his new hunting garments, and effected a satisfactory tie of a heart's-ease embroidered blue satin cravat, took his usual stand before the now blazing wood and coal fire in the enormous grate in the centre of his magnificent baronial hall, ready to receive his visitors and pass them on to Mrs. Moffatt in the banqueting room. This fair lady was just as fine as hands could make her, and the fit of her rich pale satin dress, trimmed with swan's-down, reflected equal credit on her milliner and her maid. Looking at her as she now sat at the head of the sumptuously-furnished breakfast table, her plainly dressed hair surmounted by a diminutive point-lace cap, and her gazelle-like eye lighting up an intelligent countenance, it were hardly possible to imagine that she had ever been handsomer, or that beneath that quiet aspect there lurked what is politely called a "high spirit," that is to say, a little bit of temper.

That, however, is more the Earl's look-out than ours, so we will return to his lordship at the entrance hall fire.

Of course this sort of gathering was of rather an anomalous character,—some coming because they wanted something, some because they "dirstn't" stay away, some because they did not know Mrs. Moffatt would be there, some because they did not care whether she was or not. It was a show day, and they came to see the beautiful Castle, not Mrs. Anybody.

The first to arrive were the gentlemen of the second class, the agents and dependants of the estate,—Mr. Cypher, the auditor, he who never audited; Mr. Easylease, the land agent; his son, Mr. John Easylease, the sucking land agent; Mr. Staple, the mining agent; Mr. James Staple, the sucking mining agent; Mr. Section, the architect; Mr. Pillerton, the doctor; Mr. Brick, the builder; &c., who were all very polite and obsequious, "your lordship" and "my lording" the Earl at every opportunity. These, ranging themselves on either side of the fire, now formed the nucleus of the court, with the Earl in the centre. Presently the rumbling of wheels and the grinding of gravel was succeeded by the muffled-drum sort of sound of the wood pavement of the grand covered portico, and

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the powdered footmen threw back the folding-doors as if they expected Daniel Lambert or the Durham Ox to enter. It was our old friend Imperial John, who, having handed his pipe-clayed reins to his ploughman-groom, descended from his buggy with a clumsy half-buck, half hawbuck sort of air, and entered the spacious portals of the Castle hall. Having divested himself of his paletot in which he had been doing "the pride that apes humility," he shook out his red feathers, pulled up his sea-green-silk-tied gills, finger-combed his stiff black hair, and stood forth a sort of rough impersonation of the last year's Earl. His coat was the same cut, his hat was the same shape, his boots and breeches were the same colour, and altogether there was the same sort of resemblance between John and the Earl that there is between a cart-horse and a race-horse. Having deposited his whip and paletot on the table on the door side of a tall, wide-spreading carved oak screen, which at once concealed the enterers from the court, and kept the wind from that august assembly, John was now ready for the very obsequious gentleman who had been standing watching his performances without considering it necessary to give him any assistance. This bland gentleman, in his own blue coat with a white vest, having made a retrograde movement which cleared himself of the screen, John was presently crossing the hall, bowing and stepping and bowing and stepping as if he was measuring off a drain.

His lordship, who felt grateful for John's recent services, and perhaps thought he might require them again, advanced to meet him and give him a very cordial shake of the hand, as much as to say, "Never mind Miss de Glancey, old fellow, we'll make it right another time." They then fell to conversing about turnips, John's Green Globes having turned out a splendid crop, while his Swedes were not so good as usual, though they still might improve.

A more potent wheel-roll than John's now attracted his lordship's attention, and through the far windows he saw a large canary-coloured ark of a coach, driven by a cockaded coachman, which he at once recognised as belonging to his



"I'M DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU."

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natural enemy, Major Yammerton, "five-and-thirty years master of haryers," as the Major would say, "without a subscription." Mr. Boggledike had lately been regaling his lordship with some of the Major's boastings about his "haryers" and the wonderful sport they showed, which he had had the impudence to compare with his lordship's fox hounds. Besides which, he was always disturbing his lordship's covers on the Roughborough side of the country, causing his lordship to snub him at all opportunities. The Major, however, was a keen, hard-bitten little man, not easily choked off when he wanted anything, and his present want being to be made a magistrate, he had attired himself in an antediluvian swallow-tailed scarlet, with a gothic-arched collar, and brought his wife and two pretty daughters to aid in the design. Of course the ladies were only coming to see the Castle.

The cockaded coachman having tied his reins to the rail of the driving-box, descended from his eminence to release his passengers, while a couple of cerulean-blue gentlemen looked complacently on, each with half a door in his hand ready to throw open as they approached, the party were presently at the hall table, where one of those indispensable articles, a looking-glass, enabled the ladies to rectify any little derangement incidental to the joltings of the journey, while the little Major run a pocket-comb through a fringe of carrot curls that encircled his bald head, and disposed of a cream-coloured scarf cravat to what he considered the best advantage. Having drawn a doe-skin glove on to the left hand, he offered his arm to his wife, and advanced from behind the screen with his hat in his ungloved right hand ready to transfer it to the left should occasion require.

"Ah, Major Yammerton!" exclaimed the Earl, breaking off in the middle of the turnip dialogue with Imperial John. "Ah, Major Yammerton, I'm delighted to see you" (getting a glimpse of the girls). "Mrs. Yammerton, this is indeed extremely kind," continued he, taking both her hands in his; "and bringing your lovely daughters," continued he, advancing to greet them.

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Mrs. Yammerton here gave the Major a nudge to remind him of his propriety speech. "The gi—gi—girls and Mrs. Ya—Ya—Yammerton," for he always stuttered when he told lies, which was pretty often; "the gi—gi—girls and Mrs. Ya—Ya—Yammerton have done me the honour——"

Another nudge from Mrs. Yammerton.

"I mean to say the gi—gi—girls and Mrs. Ya—Ya—Yammerton," observed he, with a stamp of the foot and a shake of the head, for he saw that his dread enemy, Imperial John, was laughing at him, "have done themselves the honour of co—co—coming, in hopes to be allowed the p—p—p—pleasure of seeing your ma—ma—magnificent collection of pi—pi—pictors," the Major at length getting out what he had been charged to say.

"By all means!" exclaimed the delighted Earl, "by all means; but first let me have the pleasure of conducting you to the refreshment-room;" saying which his lordship offered Mrs. Yammerton his arm, so passing up the long gallery, and entering by the private door, he popped her down beside Mrs. Moffatt before Mrs. Yammerton knew where she was.

Just then our friend Billy Pringle, who, with the aid of Rougier, had effected a most successful *logement* in his hunting things, made his appearance, to whom the Earl having assigned the care of the young ladies, now beat a retreat to the hall, leaving Mrs. Yammerton lost in astonishment as to what her Mrs. Grundy would say, and speculations as to which of her daughters would do for Mr. Pringle.

Imperial John, who had usurped the Earl's place before the fire, now shied off to one side as his lordship approached, and made his most flexible obeisance to the two Mr. Fothergills and Mr. Stot, who had arrived during his absence. These, then, gladly passed on to the banqueting-room just as the Condor-like wings of the entrance hall door flew open and admitted Imperial Jane, now the buxom Mrs. Poppyfield. She came smiling past the screen, magnificently attired in purple velvet and ermine, pretending she had only come to warm herself at the " 'All fire while Pop looked for the groom, who

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had brought his 'orse, and who was to drive her 'ome;" but hearing from the Earl that the Yammertons were all in the banqueting-room, she saw no reason why she shouldn't go too; so when the next shoal of company broke against the screen, she took Imperial John's arm, and preceded by a cloud of lackeys, cerulean-blue and others, passed from the hall to the grand apartment, up which she sailed majestically, tossing her plumed head at that usurper Mrs. Moffatt; and then increased the kettle of fish poor Mrs. Yammerton was in by seating herself beside her.

"Impudent woman," thought Mrs. Yammerton, "if I'd had any idea of this I wouldn't have come;" and she thought how lucky it was she had put the Major up to asking to see the "pictors." It was almost a pity he was so anxious to be a magistrate. Thought he might be satisfied with being Major of such a fine regiment as the Featherbedfordshire Militia. Nor were her anxieties diminished by the way the girls took the words out of each other's mouths, as it were, in their intercourse with Billy Pringle, thus preventing either from making any permanent impression.

The great flood of company now poured into the hall, red coats, green coats, black coats, brown coats, mingled with variously-coloured petticoats. The ladies of the court, Mrs. Cypher, Mrs. Pillerton, Mrs. and the Misses Easylease, Mrs. Section, and others, hurried through with a shivering sort of step as if they were going to bathe. Mr. D'Orsay Davis, the "we" of the Featherbedfordshire Gazette, made his bow and passed on with stately air, as a ruler of the roast ought to do. The Earl of Stare, as Mr. Buckwheat was called, from the fixed protuberance of his eyes—a sort of second edition of Imperial John, but wanting his looks, and Gameboy Green, the hard rider of the hunt, came in together; and the Earl of Stare, sporting scarlet, advanced to his brother peer, the Earl, who, not thinking him an available card, turned him over to Imperial John, who had now returned from his voyage with Imperial Jane, while his lordship commenced a building conversation with Mr. Brick.

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A lull then ensuing, as if the door had done its duty, his lordship gave a wave of his hand, whereupon the trained courtiers shot out into horns on either side, with his lordship in the centre, and passed majestically along to the banqueting room.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUNT BREAKFAST.



In gorgeous Plumage.

HE noble apartment, a hundred feet long, and correspondingly proportioned, was in the full swing of hospitality when the Earl entered. The great influx of guests for which the Castle was always prepared, had at

length really arrived, and from Mrs. Moffatt's end of the table to the door were continuous lines of party-coloured eaters, all engaged in the noble act of deglutition. Up the centre was a magnificent avenue of choice exotics in gold, silver, and china vases, alternating with sugar-spun Towers, Temples, Pagodas, and Rialtos, with here and there the more substantial form of massive plate, *épergnes*, testimonials, and prizes of different kinds. It was a regular field-day for plate, linen, and china.

The whole force of domestics was now brought to bear upon the charge, and the cerulean blue gentlemen vied with the

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gentlemen out of livery in the assiduity of their attentions. Soup, game, tea, coffee, chocolate, ham, eggs, honey, marmalade, grapes, pines, melons, ices, buns, cakes, skimmed, and soared, and floated about the room, in obedience to the behests of the callers. The only apparently disengaged person in the room was Monsieur Jean Rougier, who, in a blue coat with a velvet collar and bright buttons, a rolling-collared white vest, and an amplified lace-tipped black Joinville, stood like a pouter pigeon behind Mr. Pringle's chair, the *beau idéal* of an indifferent spectator. And yet he was anything but an indifferent spectator ; for beneath his stubbly hair were a pair of little roving, watchful eyes, and his ringed ears were cocked for whatever they could catch. The clatter, patter, clatter, patter of eating, which was slightly interrupted by the entrance of his lordship, was soon in full vigour again, and all eyes resumed the contemplation of the plates.

Presently the "*fiz, pop, bang,*" of a champagne cork was heard on the extreme right, which was immediately taken up on the left, and ran down either side of the table like gigantic crackers. Eighty guests were now imbibing the sparkling fluid as fast as the footmen could supply it. And it was wonderful what a volubility that single glass a-piece (to be sure they were good large ones) infused into the meeting ; how tongue-tied ones became talkative, and awed ones began to feel themselves sufficiently at home to tackle with the pines and sugar ornaments of the centre. Grottoes and Pyramids and Pagodas and Rialtos began to topple to their fall, and even a sugar Crystal Palace, which occupied the post of honour between two flower-decked Sèvres vases, was threatened with destruction. The band and the gardeners were swept away immediately, and an assault on the fountains was only prevented by the interference of Mr. Beverage, the butler. And now a renewed pop-ponading commenced, more formidable, if possible, than the first, and all glasses were eagerly drained, and prepared to receive the salute.

All being ready, Lord Ladythorne rose amid the applause so justly due to a man entertaining his friends, and after a few

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prefatory remarks, expressive of the pleasure it gave him to see them all again at the opening of another season, and hoping that they might have many more such meetings, he concluded by giving as a toast, "Success to fox-hunting!"—which, of course, was drunk upstanding with all the honours. All parties having gradually subsided into their seats after this uncomfortable performance, a partial lull ensued, which was at length interrupted by his lordship giving Imperial John, who sat on his left, a nod, who after a loud throat-clearing *hem!* rose bolt upright with his imperial chin well up, and began, "GENTLEMEN AND LADIES!" just as little weazeley Major Yammerton commenced, "Ladies and Gentlemen!" from Mrs. Moffatt's end of the table. This brought things to a standstill—some called for Hybrid, some for Yammerton, and each disliking the other, neither was disposed to give way. The calls, however, becoming more frequent for Yammerton, who had never addressed them before, while Hybrid had, saying the same thing both times, the Earl gave his Highness a hint to sit down, and the Major was then left in that awful predicament, from which so many men would be glad to escape, after they have achieved it, namely—the possession of the meeting. However, Yammerton had got his speech well off, and had the heads of it under his plate; so on silence being restored, he thus went away with it:—

"Ladies and gentlemen—(cough)—ladies and gentlemen—(hem)—I rise, I assure you—(cough)—with feelings of considerable trepidation—(hem)—to perform an act—(hem)—of greater difficulty than may at first sight appear—(hem, hem, haw)—for let me ask what it is I am about to do? ("You know best," growled Imperial John, thinking how ill he was doing it.) I am going to propose the health of a nobleman—(applause)—of whom, in whose presence, if I say too much, I may offend, and if I say too little, I shall most justly receive your displeasure (renewed applause). But, ladies and gentlemen, there are times when the 'umblest abilities become equal to the occasion, and assuredly this is one—(applause). To estimate the character of the illustrious nobleman aright, whose health I shall

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conclude by proposing, we must regard him in his several capacities—(applause)—as Lord-Lieutenant of the great county of Featherbedford, as a great and liberal landlord, as a kind and generous neighbour, and though last, not least, as a brilliant sportsman—(great applause, during which Yammerton looked under his plate at his notes).—As Lord-Lieutenant,” continued he, “perhaps the greatest praise I can offer him, the ’ighest compliment I can pay him, is to say that his appointments are so truly impartial as not to disclose his own politics—(applause)—as a landlord, he is so truly a pattern that it would be a mere waste of words for me to try to recommend him to your notice—(applause)—as a neighbour, he is truly exemplary in all the relations of life—(applause)—and as a sportsman, having myself kept haryers five-and-thirty years without a subscription, I may be permitted to say that he is quite first-rate—(laughter from the Earl’s end of the table, and applause from Mrs. Moffatt’s).—In all the relations of life, therefore, ladies and gentlemen,”—continued the Major, looking irately down at the laughs—“I beg to propose the bumper toast of health and long life to our ’ost, the noble Earl of Ladythorne!” Whereupon the little Major popped down on his chair, wondering whether he had omitted anything he ought to have said, and seeing him well down, Imperial John, who was not to be done out of his show-off, rose, glass in hand, and exclaimed in a stentorian voice, “GENTLEMEN AND LADIES! Oi beg to propose that we drink this toast up standin’ with all the honours!—Featherbedfordshire fire!” upon which there was a great outburst of applause, mingled with demands for wine, and requests from the ladies, that the gentlemen would be good enough to take their chairs off their dresses, or move a little to one side, so that they might have room to stand up; Crinoline, we should observe, being very abundant with many of them. A tremendous discharge of popularity then ensued, the cheers being led by Imperial John, much to the little Major’s chagrin, who wondered how he could ever have sat down without calling for them.

Now, the Earl, we should observe, had not risen in the best

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of moods that morning, having had a disagreeable dream, in which he saw old Binks riding his favourite horse Valiant, Mazeppa fashion, making a drag of his statue of the Greek slave, enveloped in an anise-seeded bathing-gown; a vexation that had been further increased when he arose, by the receipt of a letter from his "good-natured friend" in London, telling him how old Binks had been boasting at Boodle's that he was within an ace of an Earldom, and now to be clumsily palavered by Yammerton was more than he could bear. He didn't want to be praised for anything but his sporting propensities, and Imperial John knew how to do it. Having, however, a good dash of satire in his composition, when the applause and the Crinoline had subsided, he arose as if highly delighted, and assured them that if anything could enhance the pleasure of that meeting, it was to have his health proposed by such a sportsman as Major Yammerton, a gentleman who he believed had kept harriers five-and-thirty years, a feat he believed altogether unequalled in the annals of sporting—(laughter and applause)—during which the little Major felt sure he was going to conclude by proposing his health with all the honours, instead of which, however, his lordship branched off to his own department of sport, urging them to preserve foxes most scrupulously, never to mind a little poultry damage, for Mr. Boggledike would put all that right, never to let the odious word Strychnine be heard in the country, and concluded by proposing a bumper to their next merry meeting, which was the usual termination of the proceedings. The party then rose, chairs fell out of line, and flying crumpled napkins completed the confusion of the scene.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MORNING FOX.



A Bottle of Smoke.

HE day was quite at its best, when the party-coloured bees emerged from the sweets of Tantivy Castle, to taint the pure atmosphere with their nasty cigars, and air themselves on the terrace, letting the unadmitted world

below see on what excellent terms they were with an Earl. Then Imperial John upbraided Major Yammerton for taking the words out of his mouth, as it were, and the cockey Major turned up his nose at the "farmer fellow" for presuming to lector him. Then the emboldened ladies strolled through the picture-galleries and reception-rooms, regardless of Mrs. Moffatt or any one else, wondering where this door led to, and where that. The hounds had been basking and loitering on the lawn for some time, undergoing the inspection and criticisms of the

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non-hunting portion of the establishment, the gardeners, the game-keepers, the coachmen, the helpers, the housemaids, and so on. They all pronounced them as perfect as could be, and Mr. Boggledike received their compliments with becoming satisfaction, saying, with a chuck of his chin, "Yas, yas, I think they're about as good as can be! Parfaction, I may say!"

Having abused the cigars, we hope our fair friends will now excuse us for saying that we know of few less agreeable scenes than a show meet with fox-hounds. The whole thing is opposed to the wild nature of hunting. Some people can eat at any time, but to a well-regulated appetite, having to undergo even the semblance of an additional meal is inconvenient; while to have to take a *bonâ fide* dinner in the morning, soup, toasts, speeches and all, is perfectly suicidal of pleasure. On this occasion, the wine-flushed guests seemed fitter for Cremorne or Foxhall, as they used to pronounce Vauxhall, than for fox-hunting. Indeed, the cigar gentry swaggered about with a very rakish, Regent Street air. His lordship alone seemed impressed with the importance of the occasion; but his anxiety arose from indecision, caused by the Binks' dream and letter, and fear lest the Yammerton girls might spoil Billy for Miss de Glancey, should his lordship adhere to his intention of introducing them to each other. Then he began to fidget lest he might be late at the appointed place, and Miss de Glancey go home, and so frustrate either design.

"*To horse! to horse!*" therefore exclaimed he, now hurrying through the crowd, lowering his Imperial Jane-made hat-string, and drawing on his Moffatt-knit mits. "*To horse! to horse!*" repeated he, flourishing his cane hunting-whip, causing a commotion among the outer circle of grooms. His magnificent black horse, Valiant (the one he had seen old Binks bucketing), faultless in shape, faultless in condition, faultless every way, stepped proudly aside, and Cupid-without-Wings dropping himself off by the neck, Mr. Beanley, the stud groom, swept the coronetted rug over the horse's bang tail, as the superb and sensible animal stepped forward to receive his rider, as the

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Earl came up. With a jaunty air, the gay old gentleman vaulted lightly into the saddle, saying as he drew the thin rein, and felt the horse gently with his left leg, "Now get Mr. Pringle his horse." His lordship then passed on a few paces to receive the sky-scraping salutes of the servants, and at a jerk of his head the cavalcade was in motion.

Our friend Billy then became the object of attention. The dismounted Cupid dived into the thick of the led horses to seek his, while Mr. Beanley went respectfully up to him, and with a touch of his flat-brimmed hat, intimated that "his 'oss was at 'and."

"What sort of an animal is it?" asked the somewhat misgiving Billy, now bowing his adieus to the pretty Misses Yammerton.

"A very nice 'oss, sir," replied Mr. Beanley, with another touch of hat; "yes, sir, a *very* nice 'oss—a perfect 'unter—nothin' to do but sit still, and give 'im 'is 'ead, he'll take far better care o' you than you can of 'im." So saying, Mr. Beanley led the way to a very sedate-looking, thorough-bred bay, with a flat-flapped saddle, and a splint boot on his near foreleg, but in other respects quite unobjectionable. He was one of Swan's stud, but Mr. Beanley, understanding from the under butler, who had it from Jack Rogers—we beg his pardon—Monsieur Rougier himself, that Mr. Pringle was likely to be a good tip, he had drawn it for him. The stirrups, for a wonder, being the right length, Billy was presently astride, and in pursuit of his now progressing lordship, the gaping crowd making way for the young lord as they supposed him to be—for people are all lords when they visit at lords'.

Pop, pop, bob, bob, went the black caps of the men in advance, indicating the whereabouts of the hounds, while his lordship ambled over the green turf on the right, surrounded by the usual high-pressure toadies. Thus the cavalcade passed through the large wood-studded, deer-scattered park, rousing the nearer herds from their lairs, frightening the silver-tails into their holes, and causing the conceited hares to scuttle away for the fern-browned, undulating hills, as if they had the

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vanity to suppose that this goodly array would condescend to have anything to do with them. Silly things! Peppercorn, the keeper, had a much readier way of settling their business. The field then crossed the long stretch of smooth, ornamental water, by the old Gothic-arched bridge, and passed through the beautiful iron gates of the south lodge, now wheeled back by grey-headed porters, in cerulean blue plush coats, and broad, gold-laced hats. Meanwhile, the whereabouts of the accustomed hunt was indicated by a lengthening line of pedestrians and small cavalry, toiling across the park by Duntler the watcher's cottage and the deer sheds, to the door in the wall at the bottom of Crow-tree hill, from whence a bird's-eye view of the surrounding country is obtained. The piece had been enacted so often, the same company, the same day, the same hour, the same find, the same finish, that one might almost imagine it was the same fox.

On this particular occasion, however, as if out of pure contradiction, Master Reynard, by a series of successful manœuvres, lying down, running a wall, popping backwards and forwards between Ashley quarries and Warmley Gorse, varied by an occasional trip to Crow-tree hill, completely baffled Mr. Boggledike, so that it was afternoon before he brought his morning fox to hand, to the great discomfort of the Earl, who had twice or thrice signalled Swan to "who hoop" him to ground, when the tiresome animal popped up in the midst of the pack. At length Boggledike mastered him; and after proclaiming him a "cowardly, short-running dastardly traitor, no better nor a 'are,'" he chucked him scornfully to the hounds, decorating Master Pillerton's pony with the brush, while Swan distributed the pads among others of the rising generation.

The last act of the "show meet" being thus concluded, Mr. Boggledike and his men quickly collected their hounds, and set off in search of fresh fields and pastures new.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE AFTERNOON FOX



THE Earl, having disposed of his show-meet fox—a bagman, of course—now set up his business-back, and getting alongside of Mr. Boggledike, led the pack at as good a trot as the hounds and the state of the line would allow. The newly laid whinstone of the Brittleworth road rather impeded their progress at first; but this inconvenience was soon overcome by the road becoming less parsimonious in width, extending at length to a grass siding, along which his lordship ambled at a toe in the stirrup trot, his eagle-eye raking every bend and curve, his mind distracted with visions of Binks, and anxiety for the future.

He couldn't get over the dream, and the letter had anything but cheered him.

"Very odd," said he to himself, "very odd," as nothing but drab-coated farmers and dark-coated grooms lounging leisurely "on," with here and there a loitering pedestrian, broke the monotony of the scene. "Hope she's not tired, and gone home," thought he, looking now at his watch, and now back into the crowd, to see where he had Billy Pringle. There was Billy riding alongside of Major Yammerton's old flea-bitten grey, whose rider was impressing Billy with a sense of his consequence, and the excellence of his "haryers," paving the way for an invitation to Yammerton Grange. "*D-a-ash* that Yammerton," growled his lordship, thinking how he was spoiling sport at both ends; at the Castle by his uninvited eloquence, and now by his fastening on to the only man in the

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field he didn't want him to get acquainted with. And his lordship inwardly resolved that he would make Easylease a magistrate before he would make the Major one. So settling matters in his own mind, he gave the gallant Valiant a gentle tap on the shoulder with his whip, and shot a few paces ahead of Dicky, telling the whips to keep the crowd off the hounds—meaning off himself. Thus he ambled on through the quiet little village of Strotherdale, whose inhabitants all rushed out to see the hounds pass, and after tantalising poor Jonathan Gape, the turnpike-gate man, at the far end, who thought he was going to get a grand haul, he turned short to the left down the tortuous green lane leading to Quarrington Gorse.

“There's a footmark,” said his lordship to himself, looking down at the now closely eaten sward. “Ah! and there's a hat and feather,” added he as a sudden turn of the lane afforded a passing glimpse. Thus inspirited, he mended his pace a little, and was presently in sight of the wearer. There was the bay, and there was the wide-awake, and there was the green trimming, and there was the feather; but somehow, as he got nearer, they all seemed to have lost *caste*. The slender waist and graceful upright seat had degenerated into a fuller form and lazy slouch; the habit didn't look like her habit, nor the bay horse like her bay horse, and as he got within speaking distance, the healthy, full-blown face of Miss Winkworth smiled upon him instead of the mild, placid features of the elegant de Glancey.

“Ah, my dear Miss Winkworth!” exclaimed his half-disgusted, half-delighted lordship, raising his hat, and then extending the right-hand of fellowship; “Ah, my dear Miss Winkworth, I'm charmed to see you” (inwardly wondering what business women had out hunting). “I hope you are all well at home,” continued he (most devoutly wishing she was there); and without waiting for an answer, he commenced a furious assault upon Benedict, who had taken a fancy to follow him, a performance that enabled General Boggledike to come up with that army of relief, the pack, and engulf the lady in the sea of horsemen in the rear.

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"If that had been *her*," said his Lordship to himself, "old Binks would have had a better chance;" and he thought what an odious thing a bad copy was.

* * * * *

Another bend of the lane and another glimpse, presently put all matters right. The real feather now fluttered before him. There was the graceful, upright seat, the elegant air, the well-groomed horse, the *tout ensemble* being heightened, if possible, by the recent contrast with the coarse, country attired Miss Winkworth.

The Earl again trotted gently on, raising his hat most deferentially as he came alongside of her, as usual, unaverted head.

"Good morning, my lord!" exclaimed she gaily, as if agreeably surprised, tendering for the first time her pretty little primrose-coloured kid-gloved hand, looking as though she would condescend to notice a "mere fox-hunter."

The gay old gentleman pressed it with becoming fervour, thinking he never saw her looking so well before.

They then struck up a light rapid conversation.

Miss perhaps never did look brighter or more radiant, and as his lordship rode by her side, he really thought if he *could* make up his mind to surrender his freedom to any woman, it would be to her. There was a something about her that he could not describe, but still a something that was essentially different to all his other flames.

He never could bear a riding-woman before, but now he felt quite proud to have such an elegant, piquant attendant on his pack.—Should like, at all events, to keep her in the country, and enjoy her society.—Would like to add her to the collection of Featherbedfordshire witches of which his friends joked him in town.—"Might have done worse than marry Imperial John," thought his lordship. John mightn't be quite her match in point of manner, but she would soon have polished him up, and John must be doing uncommonly well as times go—cattle and corn both selling prodigiously high, and John with his farm

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at a very low rent. And the thought of John and his beef brought our friend Billy to the Earl's mind, and after a sort of random compliment between Miss de Glancey and her horse, he exclaimed, "By the way! I've got a young friend out I wish to introduce to you;" so rising in his saddle and looking back into the crowd, he hallooed out, "PRINGLE!" a name that was instantly caught up by the quick-eared Dicky, a "Mister" tacked to it and passed backward to Speed, who gave it to a groom; and Billy was presently seen boring his way through the opening crowd, just as a shepherd's dog bores its way through a flock of sheep.

"Pringle," said his lordship, as the approach of Billy's horse caused Valiant to lay back his ears, "Pringle! I want to introduce you to Miss de Glancey. Miss de Glancey, give me leave to introduce my friend Mr. Pringle," continued he, adding *sotto voce*, as if for Miss de Glancey's ear alone, "young man of very good family and fortune—*richest Commoner in England, they say.*" But before his lordship got to the richest Commoner part of his speech, a dark frown of displeasure had overcast the sweet smile of those usually tranquil features, which luckily, however, was not seen by Billy; and before he got his cap restored to his head after a sky scraping salute, Miss de Glancey had resumed her wonted complacency—inwardly resolving to extinguish the "richest Commoner," just as she had done his lordship's other "friend Mr. Hybrid." Discarding the Earl, therefore, she now opened a most voluble battering on our good-looking Billy, who, to do him justice, maintained his part so well, that a lady with less ambitious views might have been very well satisfied to be Mrs. Pringle. Indeed, when his Lordship looked at the two chatting and ogling and simpering together, and thought of that abominable old Binks and the drag, and the letter from the Boodleite, his heart rather smote him for what he had done; for young and fresh as he then felt himself, he knew that age would infallibly creep upon him at last, just as he saw it creeping upon each particular friend when he went to town, and he questioned that he should ever find any lady so eminently qualified to do

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the double duty of gracing his coronet and disappointing the General. Not but that the same thought had obtruded itself with regard to other ladies; but he now saw that he had been mistaken with respect to all of them, and that this was the real, genuine, no mistake, "right one." Moreover, Miss de Glancey was the only lady who according to his idea had not made up to him—rather snubbed him in fact. Mistaken nobleman! There are many ways of making up to a man.

But as with many, so with his lordship, the last run was always the finest, and the last lady always the fairest—the most engaging. With distracting considerations such as these, and the advantage of seeing Miss de Glancey play the artillery of her arts upon our young friend, they reached the large old pasture on the high side of Quarrington Gorse, a cover of some four acres in extent, lying along a gently sloping bank, with cross rides cut down to the brook. Mr. Boggledike pulled up near the rubbing-post in the centre of the field, to give his hounds a roll, while the second-horse gentlemen got their nags, and the newcomers exchanged their hacks for their hunters. Judging by the shaking of hands, the exclamations of "Halloo! old boy, is that you?" "I say! where are you from?" and similar inquiries, there were a good many of the latter—some who never went to the Castle, some who thought it too far, some who thought it poor fun. Altogether, when the field got scattered over the pasture, as a shopkeeper scatters his change on the counter, or as an old stage coachman used to scatter his passengers on the road with an upset, there might be fifty or sixty horsemen, assmen, and gigmen.

Most conspicuous was his lordship's old eye-sore, Hicks, the flying hatter of Hinton (Sir Moses Mainchance's "best man"), who seemed to think it incumbent upon him to kill his lordship a hound every year by his reckless riding, and who now came out in mufti, a hunting-cap, a Napoleon-grey tweed jacket, loose white cords, with tight drab leggings, and spurs on his shoes, as if his lordship's hounds were not worth the green cut-away and brown boots he sported with Sir Moses. He now gave his cap-peak a sort of rude rap with his fore-

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finger, as his lordship came up, as much as to say, "I don't know whether I'll speak to you or not," and then ran his great raking chestnut into the crowd to get at his old opponent Gameboy Green, who generally rode for the credit of the Tantivy hunt. As these sort of cattle always hunt in couples, Hicks is followed by his shadow, Tom Snowdon, the draper—or the Damper, as he is generally called, from his unhappy propensity of taking a gloomy view of everything.

To the right are a knot of half-horse, half-pony mounted Squireen-looking gentlemen, with clay pipes in their mouths, whose myrtle-green coats, baggy cords, and ill-cleaned tops, denote as belonging to the Major's "haryers." And mark how the little, pompous man wheels before them, in order that Pringle may see the reverence they pay to his red coat. He raises his punt hat with all the dignity of the immortal Simpson of Vauxhall memory, and passes on in search of further compliments.

His lordship has now settled himself into the "Wilkinson and Kidd" of Rob Roy, a bay horse of equal beauty with Valiant, but better adapted to the country into which they are now going, Imperial John has drawn his girths with his teeth, D'Orsay Davis has let down his hat-string, Mr. John Easylease has tightened his curb, Mr. Section drawn on his gloves, the Damper finished his cigar, and all things are approximating a start.

"*Elope, lads! Elope!*" cries Dicky Boggledike to his hounds, whistling and waving them together, and in an instant the rollers and wide spreaders are frolicking and chiding under his horse's nose. "*G-e-e-ntly, lads! g-e-e-ntly!*" adds he, looking the more boisterous ones reprovingly in the face—"gently, lads, gently," repeats he, "or you'll be rousin' the gem'lman i' the gos." This movement of Dicky and the hounds has the effect of concentrating the field, all except our fair friend and Billy, who are still in the full cry of conversation, Miss putting forth her best allurements the sooner to bring Billy to book.

At a chuck of his lordship's chin, Dicky turns his horse towards the gorse, just as Billy, in reply to Miss de Glancey's

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question, if he is fond of hunting, declares, as many a youth has done who hates it, that he "doats upon it!"

A whistle, a wave, and a cheer, and the hounds are away. They charge the hedge with a crash, and drive into the gorse as if each hound had a bet that he would find the fox himself.

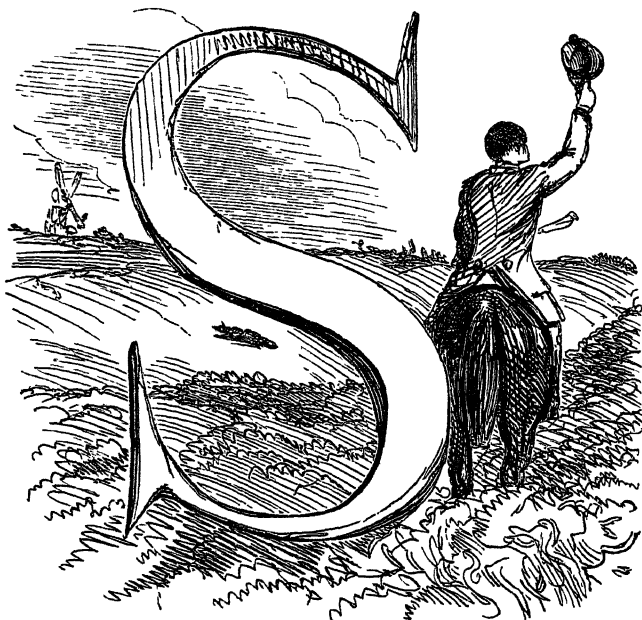
Mr. Boggledike being now free of his pack, avails himself of this moment of ease, to exhibit his neat, newly-clad person, of which he is not a little proud, by riding along the pedestrian-lined hedge, and requesting that "you fut people," as he calls them, "will have the goodness not to 'alloa, but to 'old up your 'ats if you view the fox;" and having delivered his charge in three several places, he turns into the cover by the little white bridle-gate in the middle, which Cupid-without-Wings is now holding open, and who touches his hat as Dicky passes.

The scene is most exciting. The natural inclination of the land affords every one a full view of almost every part of the sloping, southerly-lying gorse, while a bright sun, with a clear, rarified atmosphere, lights up the landscape, making the distant fences look like nothing. Weak must be the nerves that would hesitate to ride over them as they now appear.

Delusive view! Between the gorse and yonder fir-clad hills are two bottomless brooks, and ere the dashing rider reaches Fairbank Farm, whose tall chimney stands in bold relief against the clear, blue sky, lies a tract of country whose flat surface requires gulph-like drains to carry off the surplus water that rushes down from the higher grounds. To the right, though the country looks rougher, it is in reality easier, but foxes seem to know it, and seldom take that line; while to the left is a strongly-fenced country, fairish for hounds, but very difficult for horses, inasmuch as the vales are both narrow and deep. But let us find our fox and see what we can do among them. And as we are in for a burst, let us do the grand and have a fresh horse.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GONE AWAY!



The Fox crossing the Stubble-field.

EE! a sudden thrill shoots through the field though not a hound has spoken; no, not even a whimper been heard. It is Speed's new cap rising

from the dip of the ground at the low end of the cover, and now, having seen the fox "right well away," as he says, he gives such a ringing view holloa, as startles friend Echo, and brings the eager pack pouring and screeching to the cry—"Tweet! Tweet! Tweet!" now goes cantering Dicky's superfluous horn, only he doesn't like to be done out of his blow, and thinks the "fut people" may attribute the crash to his coming. All eyes are now eagerly strained to

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get a view of old Reynard, some for the pleasure of seeing him, others to speculate upon whether they will have to take the stiff stake and rise in front, or the briar-tangled boundary fence below, in order to fulfil the honourable obligation of going into every field with the hounds. Others, again, who do not acknowledge the necessity, and mean to take neither, hold their horses steadily in hand, to be ready to slip down Cherry-tree Lane, or through West Hill fold-yard, into the Billingham turnpike, according as the line of chase seems to lie.

“*Talli-ho!*” cries the Flying Hatter, as he views the fox whisking his brush as he rises the stubble-field over Fawley May Farm, and in an instant he is soaring over the boundary-fence to the clamorous pack just as his lordship takes it a little higher up, and lands handsomely in the next field. Miss de Glancey then goes at it in a canter, and clears it neatly, while Billy Pringle’s horse, unused to linger, after waiting in vain for an intimation from his rider, just gathers himself together, and takes it on his own account, shooting Billy on to his shoulder.

“He’s off! no, he’s on; he hangs by the mane!” was the cry of the foot people, as Billy scrambled back into his saddle, which he regained with anything but a conviction that he could sit at the jumps. Worst of all, he thought he saw Miss de Glancey’s shoulders laughing at his failure.

The privileged ones having now taken their unenviable precedence, the scramble became general, some going one way, some another, and the recent frowning fences are soon laid evel with the fields.

A lucky lane running parallel with the line, along which the almost mute pack were now racing with a breast-high scent, relieved our friend Billy from any immediate repetition of the leaping inconvenience, though he could not hear the clattering of horses’ hoofs behind him without shuddering at the idea of falling and being ridden over. It seemed very different he thought to the first run, or to Hyde Park; people were all so excited, instead of riding quietly, or for admiration, as they do in the park. Just as Billy was flattering himself that the leaping danger was at an end, a sudden jerk of his horse nearly chucked

ASK MAMMA.

him into Imperial John's pocket, who happened to be next in advance. The fox had been headed by the foot postman between Hinton and Sambrook; and Dicky Boggledike, after objurgating the astonished man, demanding, "What the daval business he had there?" had drawn his horse short across the lane, thus causing a sudden halt to those in the rear.

The Flying Hatter and the Damper pressing close upon the pack as usual, despite the remonstrance of Gameboy Green and others, made them shoot up to the far end of the enclosure, where they would most likely have topped the fence but for Swan and Speed getting round them, and adding the persuasion of their whips to the entreaties of Dicky's horn. The hounds sweep round to the twang, lashing and bristling with excitement.

"*Yo doit!*" cries Dicky, as Sparkler and Pilgrim feather up the lane, trying first this side, then that. Sparkler speaks! "He's across the lane." "*Hoop! hoop! tallio! tallio!*" cries Dicky cheerily, taking off his cap, and sweeping it in the direction the fox has gone, while his lordship, who has been bottling up the vial of his wrath, now uncorks it as he gets the delinquents within hearing.

"Thank you, Mr. Hicks, for pressing on my hounds! Much obliged to you, Mr. Hicks, for pressing on my hounds! Hang you, Mr. Hicks, for pressing on my hounds!" So saying, his lordship gathered Rob Roy together, and followed Mr. Boggledike through a very stiff bullfinch that Dicky would rather have shirked, had not the eyes of England been upon him.

S-w-i-c-h! Dicky goes through, and the vigorous thorns close again like a rat-trap.

"Allow me, my lord!" exclaims Imperial John from behind, anxious to be conspicuous.

"Thank 'e, no," replied his lordship carelessly, thinking it would not do to let Miss de Glancey too much into the secrets of the hunting field. "Thank 'e no," repeated he, and ramming his horse well at it, he gets through with little more disturbance of the thorns than Dicky had made. Miss de Glancey comes next, and riding quietly up the bank, she gives her horse a chuck with the curb and a touch with the whip that causes him to rise well



The Beginner's First Jump

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on his haunches and buck over without injury to herself, her hat, or her habit. Imperial John was nearly offering his services to break the fence for her, but the "*S-i-r-r!*" do you mean to insult me?" still tingling in his ears, caused him to desist. However, he gives Billy a lift by squashing through before him, whose horse then just rushed through it as before, leaving Billy to take care of himself. A switched face was the result, the pain, however, being far greater than the disfigurement.

While this was going on above, D'Orsay Davis, who can ride a spurt, has led a charge through a weaker place lower down; and when our friend had ascertained that his eyes were still in his head, he found two distinct lines of sportsmen spinning away in the distance as if they were riding a race. Added to this, the pent-up party behind him having got vent, made a great show of horsemanship as they passed.

"Come along!" screamed one.

"Look alive!" shouted another.

"Never say die!" cried a third, though they were all as ready to shut up as our friend.

Billy's horse, however, not being used to stopping, gets the bit between his teeth, and scuttles away at a very overtaking pace, bring him sufficiently near to let him see Gameboy Green and the Flying Hatter leading the honourable obligation van, out of whose extending line now a red coat, now a green coat, now a dark coat, drops in the usual "had enough" style.

In the ride-cunning, or know-the-country detachment, Miss de Glancey's floating habit, giving dignity to the figure and flowing elegance to the scene, might be seen going at perfect ease beside the noble Earl, who from the higher ground surveys Gameboy Green and the Hatter racing to get first at each fence, while the close-packing hounds are sufficiently far in advance to be well out of harm's way.

"C—a—a—tch 'em, if you can!" shrieks his lordship, eyeing their zealous endeavours.

"C—a—a—tch 'em, if you can!" repeats he, laughing, as the pace gets better and better, scarce a hound having time to give tongue.

ASK MAMMA.

"Yooi, over he goes!" now cries his lordship, as a spasmodic jerk of the leading hounds, on Alsike water meadow, turns Trumpeter's and Wrangler's heads towards the newly widened and deepened drain-cut, and the whole pack wheel to the left. What a scramble there is to get over! Some clear it, some fall back, while some souse in and out.

Now Gameboy, seeing by the newly thrown out gravel the magnitude of the venture, thrusts down his hat firmly on his brow, while Hicks gets his chestnut well by the head, and hardening their hearts they clear it in stride, and the Damper takes soundings for the benefit of those who come after. What a splash he makes!

And now the five-and-thirty years master of "haryers" without a subscription coming up, seeks to save the credit of his quivering-tailed grey by stopping to help the discontented Damper out of his difficulty, whose horse coming out on the wrong side affords them both a very fair excuse for shutting up shop.

The rest of the detachment, unwilling to bathe, after craning at the cut, scuttle away by its side down to the wooden cattle bridge below which, being crossed, the honourable obligators and the take-care-of-their-neckers are again joined in common union. It is, however, no time to boast of individual feats, or to inquire for absent friends, for the hounds still press on, though the pace is not quite so severe as it was. They are on worse soil, and the scent does not serve them so well. It soon begins to fail, and at length is carried on upon the silent system, and looks very like failing altogether.

Mr. Boggledike, who has been riding as cunning as any one, now shows to the front, watching the stooping pack with anxious eye, lest he should have to make a cast over fences that do not quite suit his convenience.

"G—e—ntly, 'urryn'! gently!" cries he, seeing that a little precipitancy may carry them off the line. "Yon cur dog has chased the fox, and the hounds are puzzled at the point where he has left him."

"Ah, sarr, what the daval business have you out with a dog

ASK MAMMA.

on such an occasion as this ? ” demands Dicky of an astonished drover who thought the road was as open to him as to Dicky.

“ O, sar ! sar ! you deserve to be put i’ the lock-up,” continues Dicky, as the pack now divide on the scent.

“ O, sar ! sar ! you should be chaasetised ! ” added he, shaking his whip at the drover, as he trotted on to the assistance of the pack.

The melody of the majority however recalls the cur-ites, and saves Dicky from the meditated assault.

While the brief check was going on, his lordship was eyeing Miss de Glancey, thinking of all the quiet captivating women he had ever seen, she was the most so. Her riding was perfection, and he couldn’t conceive how it was that he had ever entertained any objection to sportswomen. It must have been from seeing some clumsy ones rolling about who couldn’t ride ; and old Binks’s chance at that moment was not worth one farthing.

“ Where’s Pringle ? ” now asked his lordship, as the thought of Binks brought our hero to his recollection.

“ Down,” replied Miss de Glancey carelessly, pointing to the ground with her pretty amethyst-topped whip.

“ Down, is he ! ” smiled the Earl, adding half to himself and half to her, “ thought he was a muff.”

Our friend indeed has come to grief. After pulling and hauling at his horse until he got him quite savage, the irritated animal, shaking his head as a terrier shakes a rat, ran blindfold into a bullfinch, shooting Billy into a newly-made manure-heap beyond. The last of the “ harryer ” men caught his horse, and not knowing who he belonged to, just threw the bridle-rein over the next gate-post, while D’Orsay Davis, who had had enough, and was glad of an excuse for stopping, pulls up to assist Billy out of his dirty dilemma.

Augh, what a figure he was !

But see ! Mr. Boggledike is hitting off the scent, and the astonished drover is spurring on his pony to escape the chaasetisement Dicky has promised him.

At this critical moment, Miss de Glancey’s better genius whispered her to go home. She had availed herself of the short

ASK MAMMA.

respite to take a sly peep at herself in a little pocket mirror she carried in her saddle, and found she was quite as much heated as was becoming, or as could be ventured upon without detriment to her dress. Moreover, she was not quite sure but that one of her frizettes was coming out.

So now when the hounds break out in fresh melody, and the Flying Hatter and Gameboy Green are again elbowing to the front, she sits reining in her steed, evidently showing she is done.

"Oh, come along!" exclaimed the Earl, looking back for her. "Oh, come along," repeated he, waving her onward, as he held in his horse.

There was no resisting the appeal, for it was clear he would come back for her if she did, so touching her horse with the whip, she is again cantering by his side.

"I'd give the world to see you beat that impudent ugly hatter," said he, now pointing Hicks out in the act of riding at a stiff newly-plashed fence before his hounds were half over.

And his lordship spurred his horse as he spoke with a vigour that spoke the intensity of his feelings.

The line of chase then lay along the swiftly flowing Arrow banks and across Oxley large pastures, parallel with the Downton bridle-road, along which Dicky and his followers now pounded; Dicky hugging himself with the idea that the fox was making for the main earths on Bringwood Moor, to which he knew every yard of the country.

And so the fox was going as straight and as hard as ever he could, but as ill-luck would have it, young Mr. Nailor, the son of the owner of Oxley pastures, shot at a snipe at the west corner of the large pasture just as pug entered at the east, causing him to shift his line and thread Larchfield plantations instead of crossing the pasture, and popping down Tillington Dean as he intended.

Dicky had heard the gun, and the short turn of the hounds now showing him what had happened, he availed himself of the superiority of a well-mounted nobleman's huntsman in scarlet over a tweed-clad muffin-capped shooter, exclaiming at the top of his voice as he cantered past, horn in hand—

ASK MAMMA.

“O ye poachin’ daval, what business ’ave ye there!”

“O ye nasty sneakin’ snarin’ ticket-o’-leaver, go back to the place from whence you came!” leaving the poor shooter staring with astonishment.

A twang of the horn now brings the hounds—who have been running with a flinging catching side-wind scent on to the line, and a full burst of melody greets the diminished field, as they strike it on the bright grass of the plantation.

“For—rard! for—rard!” is the cry, though there isn’t a hound but what is getting on as fast as he can.

The merry music reanimates the party, and causes them to press on their horses with rather more freedom than past exertions warrant.

Imperial John’s is the first to begin wheezing, but his Highness feeling him going, covers the retreat of his hundred-and-fifty-guineas-worth, as he hopes he will be, under shelter of the plantation.

* * * * *

“I think the ’atter’s ’oss has about ’ad enough,” now observes Dicky to his lordship, as he holds open the bridle-gate at the end of the plantation into the Benington Lane for his lordship and Miss de Glancey to pass.

“Glad of it,” replied the Earl, thinking the Hatter would not be able to go home and boast how he had cut down the Tantivy men and hung them up to dry.

“’Old ’ard, one moment!” now cries Dicky, raising his right hand as the Hatter comes blundering through the quickset fence into the hard lane, his horse nearly alighting on his nose.

“’Old ’ard, please!” adds he, as the Hatter spurs among the road-stopping pack.

“Hooick to Challenger! Hooick to Challenger!” now holloas Dicky, as Challenger, after sniffing up the grassy mound of the opposite hedge, proclaims that the fox is over; and Dicky getting his horse short by the head, slips behind the Hatter’s horse’s tail for his old familiar friend the gap in the corner, while the Hatter gathers his horse together to fulfil the honourable obligation of going with the hounds.

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"C—u—r—m up!" cries he, with an *obligato* accompaniment of the spur rowels, which the honest beast acknowledges by a clambering flounder up the bank, making the descent on his head on the field side that he nearly executed before. The Hatter's legs perform a sort of wands of a mill evolution.

"Not hurt, I hope!" holloas the Earl, who with Miss de Glancey now lands a little above, and seeing the Hatter rise and shake himself, he canters on, giving Miss de Glancey a touch on the elbow, and saying with a knowing look, "*That's capital!* get rid of him, leggings and all!"

His lordship having now seen the last of his tormentors, has time to look about him a little.

"Been a monstrous fine run," observes he to the lady, as they canter together behind the pace-slackening pack.

"Monstrous," replies the lady, who sees no fun in it at all.

"How long has it been?" asked his lordship of Swan, who now shows to the front as a whip-aspiring huntsman is wont to do.

"An hour all but five minutes, my lord," replies the magnifier, looking at his watch. "No—no—an hour 'zactly, my lord," adds he, trotting on—restoring his watch to his fob as he goes.

"An hour best pace with but one slight check—can't have come less than twelve miles," observes his lordship, thinking it over.

"Indeed," replied Miss de Glancey, wishing it was done.

"Grand sport, fox-hunting, isn't it?" asked his lordship, edging close up to her.

"Charming!" replied Miss de Glancey, feeling her failing frizette.

The effervescence of the thing is now about over, and the hounds are reduced to a very plodding pains-taking pace. The day has changed for the worse, and heavy clouds are gathering overhead. Still there is a good holding scent, and as the old saying is, a fox so pressed must stop at last, the few remaining sportsmen begin speculating on his probable destination, one backing him for Cauldwell rocks, another for Fulford woods, a third for the Hawkhurst hills.

ASK MAMMA.

“’Awk’urst ’ills for a sovereign!” now cries Dicky, hustling his horse, as, having steered the nearly mute pack along Sandywell banks, Challenger and Sparkler strike a scent on the track leading up to Sorryfold Moor, and go away at an improving pace.

“’Awk’urst ’ills for a fi’-pun note!” adds he, as the rest of the pack score to cry.

“Going to have rine!” now observes he, as a heavy drop beats upon his up-turned nose. At the same instant a duplicate drop falls upon Miss de Glancey’s fair cheek, causing her to wish herself anywhere but where she was.

Another, and another, and another, follow in quick succession, while the dark dreary moor offers nothing but the inhospitable freedom of space. The cold wind cuts through her, making her shudder for the result. “He’s for the hills!” exclaims Gameboy Green, still struggling on with a somewhat worse-for-wear looking steed.

“He’s for the hills!” repeats he, pointing to a frowning line in the misty distance.

At the same instant his horse puts his foot in a stone-hole, and Gameboy and he measure their lengths on the moor.

“That comes of star-gazing,” observed his lordship, turning his coat-collar up about his ears. “That comes of star-gazing,” repeats he, eyeing the loose horse scampering the wrong way.

“We’ll see no more of him,” observed Miss de Glancey, wishing she was as well out of it as Green.

“Not likely, I think,” replied his lordship, seeing the evasive rush the horse gave, as Speed, who was coming up with some tail hounds, tried to catch him.

The heath-brushing fox leaves a scent that fills the painfully still atmosphere with the melody of the hounds, mingled with the co-beck—co-beck—co-beck of the startled grouse. There is a solemn calm that portends a coming storm. To Miss de Glancey, for whom the music of the hounds has no charms, and the fast-gathering clouds have great danger, the situation is peculiarly distressing. She would stop if she durst, but on the middle of a dreary moor how dare she?

An ominous gusty wind, followed by a vivid flash of lightning and a piercing scream from Miss de Glancey, now startled the Earl's meditations.

"Lightning!" exclaimed his lordship, turning short round to her assistance. "Lightning! in the month of November—never heard of such a thing!"

But ere his lordship gets to Miss de Glancey's horse, a most terrific clap of thunder burst right overhead, shaking the earth to the very centre, silencing the startled hounds, and satisfying his lordship that it *was* lightning.

Another flash, more vivid if possible than the first, followed by another pealing crash of thunder, more terrific than before, calls all hands to a hurried council of war on the subject of shelter.

"We must make for the Punch-bowl at Rockbeer," exclaims General Boggledike, flourishing his horn in an ambiguous sort of way, for he wasn't quite sure he could find it.

"*You* know the Punch-bowl at Rockbeer!" shouts he to Harry Swan, anxious to have some one on whom to lay the blame if he went wrong.

"I know it when I'm there," replied Swan, who didn't consider it part of his duty to make imaginary runs to ground for his lordship.

"Know it when you're there, man," retorted Dicky in disgust; "why any——" the remainder of his sentence being lost in an tremendously illuminating flash of lightning, followed by a long cannonading, reverberating roll of thunder.

Poor Miss de Glancey was ready to sink into the earth.

"*Elope, hounds! elope!*" cried Dicky, getting his horse short by the head, and spurring him into a brisk trot. "*Elope, hounds! elope!*" repeated he, setting off on a speculative cast, for he saw it was no time for dallying.

And now,

"From cloud to cloud the rending lightnings rage;
Till in the furious elemental war
Dissolved, the whole precipitated mass,
Unbroken floods and solid torrents pour."

Luckily for Dicky, an unusually vivid flash of lightning so



"A WRECK OF A BELLE."

ASK MAMMA.

lit up the landscape as to show the clump of large elms at the entrance to Rockbeer: and taking his bearings, he went swish swash, squirt spurt, swish swash, squirt spurt, through the spongy, half-land, half-water moor, at as good a trot as he could raise. The lately ardent, pressing hounds follow on in long-drawn file, looking anything but large or formidable. The frightened horses tucked in their tails, and looked fifty per cent. worse for the suppression. The hard, driving rain beat down-ways, and sideways, and frontways, and backways—all ways at once. The horses know not which way to duck to evade the storm. In less than a minute Miss de Glancey is as drenched as if she had taken a shower-bath. The smart hat and feather are annihilated; the dubious frizette falls out, down comes the hair; the bella-donna-inspired radiance of her eyes is quenched; the Crinoline and wadding dissolve like ice before the fire; and ere the love-cured Earl lifts her off her horse at the Punch-bowl at Rockbeer, she has no more shape or figure than an icicle. Indeed, she very much resembles one, for the cold sleet, freezing as it fell, has encrusted her in a rich coat of ice lace, causing her saturated garments to cling to her with the utmost pertinacity. A more complete wreck of a belle was, perhaps, never seen.

“*What an object!*” inwardly ejaculated she, as Mrs. Hetherington, the landlady, brought a snivelling mould candle into the cheerless, fireless little inn-parlour, and she caught a glimpse of herself in the—at best—most unbecoming mirror. What would she have given to have turned back!

And as his lordship hurried upstairs in his water-logged boots, he said to himself, with a nervous swing of his arm, “I was right!—women *have* no business out hunting.” And the Binks chance improved amazingly.

The further *dénouement* of this perishing day will be gleaned from the following letters.

ASK MAMMA.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRINGLE CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. WILLIAM TO HIS MAMMA.

"TANTIVY CASTLE,
"November.

"MY DEAREST MAMMA,

"Though I wrote to you only the other day, I take up my pen, stiff and sore as I am and scarcely able to sit, to tell you of my first day's hunt, which, I assure you, was anything but enjoyable. In fact, at this moment I feel just as if I had been thumped by half the pugilists in London, and severely kicked at the end. To my fancy, hunting is about the most curious, unreasonable amusement that ever was invented. The first fox was well enough, running backwards and forwards in an agreeable manner, though they all abused him and called him a cowardly beggar, though to my mind it was far pluckier to do what he did, with fifty great dogs after him, than to fly like a thief as the next one did. Indeed I saw all the first run without the slightest inconvenience or exertion, for a very agreeable gentleman, called Major Hammerton, himself an old keeper of hounds, led me about and showed me the country.

"I don't mean to say that he led my horse, but he showed me the way to go, so as to avoid the jumps, and pointed out the places where I could get a peep of the fox. I saw him frequently. The Major, who was extremely polite, asked me to go and stay with him after I leave here, and I wouldn't mind going if it wasn't for the hounds, which, however, he says are quite as fine as his lordship's, without being so furiously and inconveniently fast. For my part, however, I don't see the use

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of hunting an animal that you can shoot, as they do in France. It seems a monstrous waste of exertion. If they were all as sore as I am this morning, I'm sure they wouldn't try it again in a hurry. I really think racing, where you pay people for doing the dangerous for you, is much better fun, and prettier, too, for you can choose any lively colour you like for your jacket, instead of having to stick to scarlet or dark clothes.

"But I will tell you about fox No. 2. I was riding with a very pretty young lady, Miss de Glancey, whom the Earl had just introduced me to, when all of a sudden everybody seemed to be seized with an uncontrollable galloping mania, and set off as hard as ever their horses could lay legs to the ground. My horse, who they said was a perfect hunter, but who, I should say, was a perfect brute, partook of the prevailing epidemic, and, though he had gone quite quietly enough before, now seized the bit between his teeth, and plunged and reared as though he would either knock my teeth down my throat, or come back over upon me. 'Drop your hand!' cried one. 'Ease his head!' cried another, and what was the consequence? He ran away with me, and, dashing through a flock of turkeys, nearly capsized an old sow.

"Then the people, who had been so civil before, all seemed to be seized with the rudes. It was nothing but '*G-u-u-r* along, sir! *g-u-u-r* along! Hang it! don't you see the hounds are running!' just as if I had made them run, or as if I could stop them. My good friend, the Major, seemed to be as excited as anybody: indeed, the only cool person was Miss de Glancey, who cantered away in a most unconcerned manner. I am sorry to say she came in for a desperate ducking. It seems that after I had had as much as I wanted, and pulled up to come home, they encountered a most terrific thunderstorm in crossing some outlandish moor, and as his lordship, who didn't get home till long after dark, said, she all at once became a dissolving view, and went away to nothing. Mrs. Moffatt, who is stout and would not easily dissolve, seemed amazingly tickled with the joke, and said she supposed she would look like a Mermaid—which his lordship said was exactly the case.

ASK MAMMA.

When the first roll of thunder was heard here, the Earl's carriage and four was ordered out, with dry things, to go in quest of him; but they tried two of his houses of call before they fell in with him. It then had to return to take the Mermaid to her home, who had to borrow the publican's wife's Sunday clothes to travel in.

"After dinner, the stud-groom came in to announce the horses for to-day; and hearing one named for me, I begged to decline the honour, on the plea of having a great many letters to write, so Mrs. Moffatt accompanied his lordship to the meet, some ten miles north of this, in his carriage and four, from whence she has just returned, and says they went away with a brilliant scent from Foxlydiate Gorse, meaning, I presume, with another such clatter as we had yesterday. I am glad I didn't go, for I don't think I could have got on to a horse, let alone sit one, especially at the jumps, which all the Clods in the country seem to have clubbed their ideas to concoct. Rougier says people are always stiff after the first day's hunting; but if I had thought I should be as sore and stiff as I am, I don't think I would ever have taken a day, because Major Hammerton says it is not necessary to go out hunting in the morning to entitle one to wear the dress uniform in the evening—which is really all I care for.

"The servants here seem to live like fighting-cocks, from Rougier's account; breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, teas, and suppers. They sit down, ten or a dozen at the second table, and about thirty or so in the hall, besides which there are no end of people out of doors. Rougier says they have wine at the second table, and *eau de vie* punch at night at discretion, of which, I think, he takes more than is discreet, for he came swaggering into my room at daybreak this morning, in his evening dress, with his hat on, and a great pewter inkstand in his hand, which he set down on the dressing-table, and said, '*Dere, sir, dere is your shavin' vater!*' Strange to say, the fellow speaks better English when he's drunk than he does when he's sober. However, I suppose I must have a valet, otherwise I should think it would be a real kindness to give the great lazy

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fellows here something to do, other than hanging about the passages waylaying the girls. I'll write you again when I know what I'm going to do, but I don't think I shall stay here much longer, if I'm obliged to risk my neck after these ridiculous dogs. Ever, my dearest Mamma, your most affectionate, but excruciatingly sore, son,

“WM. PRINGLE.”

The following is Mrs. Pringle's answer; who, it will be seen, received Billy's last letter while she was answering his first one :—

“25, CURTAIN CRESCENT,
“BELGRAVE SQUARE,
“LONDON.

“MY OWN DEAREST WILLIAM,

“I was overjoyed, my own darling, to receive your kind letter, and hear that you had arrived safe, and found his lordship so kind and agreeable. I thought you had known him by sight, or I would have prevented your making the mistake by describing him to you. However, there is no harm done. In a general way, the great man of the place is oftentimes the least.—The most accessible, that is to say. The Earl is an excellent, kind-hearted man, and it will do you great good among your companions to be known to be intimate with him, for I can assure you it is not every one he takes up with. Of course, there are people who abuse him, and say he is this and that, and so on; but you must take people—especially great ones—as you find them in this world, and he is quite as good as his whites-of-their-eyes-turning-up neighbours. Don't, however, presume on his kindness by attempting to stay beyond what he presses you to do, for two short visits tell better than one long one, looking as though you had been approved of. You can easily find out from the butler or the groom of the chambers, or some of the upper servants, how long you are expected to stay, or perhaps some of the guests can tell you how long they are invited for.

“I had written thus far when your second welcome letter

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arrived, and I can't tell you how delighted I am to hear you are safe and well, though I'm sorry to hear you don't like hunting, for I assure you it is the best of all possible sports, and there is none that admits of such elegant variety of costume.

"Look at a shooter—what a ragamuffin dress his is, hardly distinguishable from a keeper; and yachters and cricketers might be taken for ticket-of-leave men. I should be very sorry indeed if you were not to persevere in your hunting; for a red coat and leathers are quite your become, and there is none, in my opinion, in which a gentleman looks so well, or a snob so ill. Learning to hunt can't be more disagreeable than learning to sail or to smoke, and see how many hundreds—thousands I may say—overcome the difficulty every year, and blow their clouds, as they call them, on the quarter-deck, as though they had been born sailors with pipes in their mouths. Remember, if you can't manage to sit your horse, you'll be fit for nothing but a seat in Parliament along with Captain Catlap and the other incurables. I can't think there can be much difficulty in the matter, judging from the lumpy wash-balley sort of men one hears talking about. I should think if you had a horse of your own, you would be able to make better out. Whatever you do, however, have nothing to do with racing. It's only for rogues and people who have more money than they know what to do with, and to whom it doesn't matter whether they win or they lose. We mustn't have you setting up a confidential crossing-sweeper with a gold eyeglass. No gentleman need expect to make money on the turf, for if you were to win they wouldn't pay you, whereas, if you lose it's quite a different thing. One of the beauties of hunting is that people have no inducement to poison each other; whereas in racing, from poisoning horses they have got to poisoning men, besides which one party must lose if the other is to win. Mutual advantage is impossible. Another thing, if you were to win ever so, the trainer would always keep his little bill in advance of your gains, or he would be a very bad trainer.

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"I hope Major Hammerton is a gentleman of station, whose acquaintance will do you good, though the name is not very aristocratic—Hamilton would have been better. Are there any Miss H.'s? Remember there are always forward people in the world, who think to advance themselves by taking strangers by the hand, and that a bad introduction is far worse than none. Above all, never ask to be introduced to a great man. Great people have their eyes and ears about them just as well as little ones, and if they choose to know you, they will make the advance. Asking to be introduced only prejudices them against you, and generally insures a cut at the first opportunity.

"Beware of Miss de Glancey. She is a most determined coquette, and if she had fifty suitors, wouldn't be happy if she saw another woman with one, without trying to get him from her. *She hasn't a halfpenny.* If you see her again, ask her if she knows Mr. Hotspur Smith, or Mr. Enoch Benson, or Mr. Woodhorn, and tell me how she looks. What is she doing down there? Surely she hasn't the vanity to think she can captivate the Earl. You needn't mention me to Mrs. Moffatt, but I should like to know what she has on, and also if there are any new dishes for dinner. Indeed, the less you talk about your belongings the better; for the world has but two ways, that of running people down much below their real level, or of extolling them much beyond their deserts. Remember, well-bred people always take breeding for granted, 'one of us,' as they say of others when they find them at good houses, and as you have a good name, you have nothing to do but hold your tongue, and the chances are they will estimate you at far more than your real worth.

"A valet is absolutely indispensable for a young gentleman. Bless you! you would be thought nothing of among the servants if you hadn't one. They are their masters' trumpeters. A valet, especially a French one, putting on two clean shirts a day, and calling for Burgundy after your cheese, are about the most imposing things in the lower regions. In small places, giving as much trouble as possible, and asking for things you

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think they haven't got, is very well ; but this will not do where you now are. In a general way, it is a bad plan taking servants to great houses, for, as they all measure their own places by the best they have ever seen, and never think how many much worse ones there are, they come back discontented, and are seldom good for much until they have undergone a quarter's starving or so, out of place. It is a good thing when the great man of a country sets an example of prudence and economy, for then all others can quote him, instead of having the bad practices of other places raked up as authority for introducing them into theirs. The Earl, however, would never be able to get through half his income if he was not to wink at a little prodigality, and the consumption of wine in great houses would be a mere nothing if it was not for the assistance of the servants. Indeed, the higher you get into society, the less wine you get, until you might expect to see it run out to nothing at a Duke's. I daresay Rougier will be fond of drink, and the English servants will perhaps be fond of plying him with it ; but, so long as he does not get incompetent, a little jollity on his part will make them more communicative before him, and it is wonderful what servants can tell. They know everything in the kitchen—nothing in the parlour. His lordship, I believe, doesn't allow strange servants to wait except upon very full occasions, otherwise it might be well to put Rougier under the *surveillance* of Beverage, the butler, lest he should come into the room drunk and incompetent, which would be very disagreeable.

“I enclose you a gold fox-head pin to give Mr. Boggledike, who doesn't take money, at least nothing under 5*l.*, and this only costs 18*s.* He is a favourite with his lordship, and it will be well to be in with him. You had better give the men who whip the hounds a trifle, say 10*s.* or half-a-sovereign each—gold looks better than silver. If you go to Major Hammerton's you must let me know ; but perhaps you will inquire further before you fix. And now, hoping that you will stick to your hunting, and be more successful on another horse after a quieter fox, believe me ever, my

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own dearest William, your most truly and sincerely affectionate mother,

“EMMA PRINGLE.

“P.S.—Don't forget the two clean shirts.

“P.S.—When you give Dicky Boggledike the pin, you can compliment him on his talents as a huntsman (as Mr. Redpath did the actor); and as they say he is a very bad one, he will be all the more grateful for it.

“P.S.—I have just had another most pressing letter from your uncle Jerry, urging me to go and look through all the accounts and papers, as he says it is not fair throwing such a heavy responsibility upon him. Poor man! He need not be so pressing. He little knows how anxious I am to do it. I hope now we shall get something satisfactory, for as yet I know no more than I did before your poor father died.

“P.S.—Don't forget to tell me if there are any Miss H.'s, and whatever you do, take care of Dowb, that is yourself.”

But somehow Billy forgot to tell his Mamma whether there were any Miss H.'s or not, though he might have said “No,” seeing they were Miss “Y.'s.”

And now, while our hero is recovering from his bruises, let us introduce the reader further to his next host, Major Y.

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CHAPTER XXV.

MAJOR YAMMERTON'S COACH STOPS THE WAY.



MAJOR YAMMERTON was rather a peculiar man, inasmuch as he was an Ass, without being a Fool. He was an Ass for always puffing and inflating himself, while as regarded worldly knowledge, particularly that comprised in the magic letters *£ s. d.*, few, if any, were his equals. In the former department, he was always either on the strut or the fret, always either proclaiming the marked attention he had met with, or worrying himself with the idea that he had not had enough. At home, instead of offering people freely and hospitably what he had, he was continually boring them with apologies for what he had not. Just as if all men were expected to have things alike, or as if the Major was an injured innocent who had been defrauded of his rights. If he was not boring and apologising, then he was puffing or praising everything indiscriminately—depending, of course, upon who he had there—a great gun or a little one.

He returned from his Tantivy Castle hunt, very much pleased with our Billy, who seemed to be just the man for his money, and by the aid of his Baronetage he made him out to be very highly connected. Mrs. Yammerton and the young ladies were equally delighted with him, and it was unanimously resolved that he should be invited to the Grange, for which purpose the standing order of the house “never to invite any one direct from a great house to theirs,” was suspended. A very salutary rule it is for all who study appearances, seeing that what looks very well one way may look very shady the other; but this

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being perhaps a case of "now or never," the exception would seem to have been judiciously made. The heads of the house had different objects in view; Mamma's, of course, being matrimonial, the Major's, the laudable desire to sell Mr. Pringle a horse. And the mention of Mamma's object leads us to the young ladies.

These, Clara, Flora, and Harriet, were very pretty, and very highly educated—that is to say, they could do everything that is useless—play, draw, sing, dance, make wax-flowers, bead-stands, do decorative gilding, and crochet-work; but as to knowing how many ounces there are in a pound of tea, or how many pounds of meat a person should eat in a day, they were utterly, entirely, and most elegantly ignorant. Towards the close of the last century, and at the beginning of the present one, ladies ran entirely to domesticity, pickling, preserving, and pressing people to eat. Corded petticoats and patent mangles long formed the staple of a mid life woman's conversation. Presently a new era sprang up, which banished everything in the shape of utilitarianism, and taught the then rising generation that the less they knew of domestic matters the finer ladies they would be, until we really believe the daughters of the nobility are better calculated for wives, simply because they are generally economically brought up, and are not afraid of losing *caste*, by knowing what every woman ought to do. No man thinks the worse of a woman for being able to manage her house, while few men can afford to marry mere music stools and embroidery frames. Mrs. Yammerton, however, took a different view of the matter. She had been brought up in the patent mangle and corded petticoat school, and inwardly resolved that her daughters should know nothing of the sort—should be "real ladies," in the true kitchen acceptation of the term. Hence they were mistresses of all the little accomplishments before enumerated, which, with making calls and drinking tea, formed the principal occupation of their lives. Not one of them could write a letter without a copy, and were all very uncertain in their spelling—though they knew to a day when every King and Queen began to reign, and could spout all the



THE THREE GRACES.

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chief towns in the kingdom. Now this might have been all very well, at least bearable, if the cockey Major had had plenty of money to give them, but at the time they were acquiring them, the "contrary was the case," as the lawyers say. The Major's grandfather (his father died when he was young) had gone upon the old annexation principle of buying land and buying land simply because "it joined," and not always having the cash to pay for it with, our Major came into an estate (large or small, according as the reader has more or less of his own) saddled with a good, stout, firmly setting mortgage. Land, however, being the only beast of burthen that does not show what it carries, our orphan—orphan in top-boots to be sure—passed for his best, and was speedily snapped up by the then beautiful, Italian-like Miss Winnington, who consoled herself for the collapse of his fortune, by the reflection that she had nothing of her own. Perhaps, too, she had made allowance for the exaggeration of estimates, which generally rate a man at three or four times his worth. The Winningtons, however, having made a great "crow" at the "catch," the newly-married couple started at score as if the estate had nothing to carry but themselves.

In due time the three Graces appeared—Clara, very fair, with large languishing blue eyes and light hair; Flora, with auburn hair and hazel eyes; and Harriet, tall, clear, and dark, like Mamma. As they grew up, and had had their heads made into Almanacs at home, they were sent to the celebrated Miss Featherery's finishing and polishing seminary at Westbourne Grove, who for 200*l.* a year, or as near 200*l.* as she could get, taught them all the airs and graces, particularly how to get in and out of a carriage properly, how to speak to a doctor, how to a counter-skipper, how to a servant, and so on. The Major, we may state, had his three daughters taken as two. Well, just as Miss Harriet was supplying the place of Miss Clara (polished), that great agricultural revolution, the repeal of the corn laws, took place, and our Major, who had regarded his estate more with an eye to its hunting and shooting capabilities than to high farming, very soon found it slipping away

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from him, just as Miss de Glancey slipped away from her dress in the thunder-storm. Up to that time, his easy-minded agent, Mr. Bullrush, a twenty-stone man of sixty years of age, had thought the perfection of management was not to let an estate go back, but now the Major's seemed likely to slip through its girths altogether. To be sure, it had not had any great assistance in the advancing line, and was just the same sour, rush-grown, poachy, snipe-shooting looking place that it was when the Major got it; but this was not his grandfather's fault, who had buried as many stones in great gulf-like drains, as would have carried off a river and walled the estate all round into the bargain; but there was no making head against wet land with stone drains, the bit you cured only showing the wetness of the rest. The blotchy March fallows looked as if they had got the small-pox, the pastures were hardly green before Midsummer, and the greyhound-like cattle that wandered over them were evidently of Pharaoh's lean sort, and looked as if they would *never* be ready for the butcher. Foreign cattle, too, were coming in free, and the old cry of "down corn, down horn," frightened the fabulously famed "stout British farmer" out of his wits.

Then those valuable documents called leases—so binding on the landlord, were found to be wholly inoperative on the tenants, who threw up their farms as if there were no such things in existence. If the Major wouldn't take their givings up, why then he might just do his "warst"; meanwhile, of course, they would "do their warst," by the land. With those who had nothing (farming and beer-shop keeping being about the only trades a man can start with upon nothing), of course, it was of no use persisting, but the awkward part of the thing was, that this probing of pockets showed that in too many cases the reputed honesty of the British farmer was also mere fiction; for some who were thought to be well off, now declared that their capital was their aunt's, or their uncle's, or their grandmother's, or some one else's, so that the two classes, the have-somethings, and the have-nothings, were reduced to a level. This sort of thing went on throughout the country, and

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a prey to the "Henerey Browns & Co." of life, we find gentlemen advertising for farms in all directions, generally stipulating that they are to be on the line of one or other of the once derided railways.

But we are getting in advance of the times with our Major, whom we left in the slough of despond, consequent on the coming down of his rents. Just when things were at their worst, the first sensible sunbeam of simplicity that ever shone upon land, appeared in the shape of the practical, easy-working Drainage Act, an act that has advanced agriculture more than all previous inventions and legislation put together. But our gallant friend had his difficulties to contend with even here.

Mr. Bullrush was opposed to it. He was fat and didn't like trouble, so he doubted the capacity of such a pocket companion as a pipe to carry off the superfluous water, then he doubted the ability of the water to get into the pipe at such a depth, above all he doubted the ability of the tenants to pay drainage interests. "How could they if they couldn't pay their rents?" Of course, the tenants adopted this view of the matter, and were all opposed to making what they called "experiences," at their own expense; so upon the whole, Mr. Bullrush advised the Major to have nothing to do with it. It being, however, a case of necessity with the Major, he disregarded Mr. Bullrush's advice, which led to a separation, and being now a free agent, he went boldly at the government loan, and soon scared all the snipes and half the tenants off his estate. The water poured off in torrents; the plump juicy rushes got the jaundice, and Mossington bog, over which the Major used to have a scuttle on foot after his "haryers," became sound enough to carry a horse. Then as Mr. Bullrush rode by and saw each dreary swamp become sound ground, he hugged himself with the sloven's consolation that it "wouldn't p-a-a-y." Pay, however, it did, for our Major next went and got some stout horses, and the right sort of implements of agriculture, and soon proved the truth of the old adage, that it is better to follow a sloven than a scientific farmer. He worked his land well, cleaned it

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well, and manured it well; in which three simple operations consists the whole science of husbandry, and instead of growing turnips for pickling, as his predecessors seemed to do, he got great healthy Swedes that loomed as large as his now fashionable daughters' dresses. He grew as many "bowels" of oats upon one acre of land as any previous tenant had done upon three. So altogether, our Major throve, and instead of going to Boulogne, he presently set up the Cockaded Coach in which we saw him arrive at Tantivy Castle. Not that he went to a coachmaker's and said, "Build me a roomy family coach regardless of expense"; but, finding that he couldn't get an inside seat along with the thirty-six yard dresses in the old chariot, he dropped in at the sale of the late Squire Trefoil's effects, who had given some such order, and, under pretence of buying a shower-bath, succeeded in getting a capital large coach on its first wheels for ten pounds—scarcely the value of the pole.

As a contrast to Henerey Brown & Co.'s business-like offer for the farm, and in illustration of the difference between buying and selling, we append the verbose estimate of this ponderous affair. Thus it runs—

HENRY TREFOIL, ESQ.,

To CHALKER AND CHARGER,

Coachmakers, by appointment, to the Emperor of China, the Emperor of Morocco, the King of Oude, the King of the Cannibal Islands, &c., &c., &c., &c.

LONG ACRE, LONDON.

(Followed by all the crowns, arms, orders, flourish, and flannel, peculiar to aristocratic tradesmen.)

ESTIMATE of a new highly-finished Coach, of the best materials and workmanship, Steps trimmed with Morocco, neatly welted and recessed into Doors, Seats wove with Cane and Trunks under them, Venetian Blinds, Silk Spring Curtains, best Plate Glasses, the Frames covered with black Velvet; private Locks to doors and bolts to Blind, Silver plated or polished Brass bead Mouldings round upper framing, Door Handles, and two handsome Lamps. The Lining of fine cloth, trimmed with a fashionable Lace and Morocco or rich silk Taberette to side and back Squabs, and to the Tops of Cushions;

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the whole stuffed with best curled hair, and quilted, and a handsome Carpet to bottom and Steps. The Body suspended on a light fashionable Compass Perch.

	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Carriage, with best steel Springs, Jacks and Braces to the Backs, wrought-iron Axletrees with Case-hardened Arms and Boxes, Wheels hooped with solid tyre and alternate Spokes, a Barouche Seat attached to forepart of Body, and a swinging Footboard to the hind part. The whole well secured with best Iron, and neatly carved, painted any colour, with Arms and Crest on doors, and high varnished and polished	290	0	0
If a Platform Boot attached to forepart of Body, with strong Compass iron-work	14	14	0
Compass Head, Standards, and Footman's Cushion	12	18	0
Four Lace Holders for Footman	2	14	0
Hind Boot and Seat trimmed with Cloth and Lace to match, and a Knee Boot and Drop Box	31	10	0
Drag Chain and Shoe	2	10	0
To three new large Imperials, made to cover the whole of Roof: the centre one made extra deep, covered with Leather, lined with Linen, and fixing with Straps, Buckles, and Staples	21	0	0
To three covers for do. of strong Floorcloth, welted with Leather	3	19	0
To a new Wheel Wrench	0	10	0
To a Cover for Body, and made to go over front Seat, of fine brown Holland	3	7	0
To packing up the Body with mats, and a large piece of Floorcloth to go over the whole, and covering part of the Carriage with paper mats and haybands. A man and horse taking it to the Euston station and expenses	6	18	0
	<u>£390</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

Deduct for Money $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

Three hundred and ninety pounds! And to think that the whole should come to be sold for ten sovereigns. Oh, what a falling off was there, my coachmakers! Surely the King of the Cannibal Islands could never afford to pay such prices as those! Verily, Sir Robert Peel was right when he said that there was no class of tradespeople whose bills wanted reforming so much as coachmakers. What ridiculous prices they make wood and iron assume, and what absurd offers they make when you go to them to sell!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MAJOR'S MENAGE.



"Old Solomon."

ND first about the "haryers!" "Five-and-thirty years master of haryers without a subscription!"

This, we think, is rather an exaggeration, both as regards time and money, unless the Major reckons an undi-

vided moiety he had in an old lady-hound called "Lavender" along with the village blacksmith of Billinghamurst when he was at school. If he so calculates, then he would be right as to time but wrong as to money, for the blacksmith paid his share of the tax, and found the greater part of the food. For thirty years, we need hardly tell the reader of sporting literature, that the Major had been a master of harriers—for well has he blown the horn of their celebrity during the whole of that long period—never were such harriers for finding jack hares, and pushing them

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through parishes innumerable, making them take rivers, and run as straight as railways, putting the costly performances of the foxhounds altogether to the blush. Ten miles from point to point, and generally without a turn, is the usual style of thing, the last run with this distinguished pack being always unsurpassed by any previous performance. Season after season has the sporting world been startled with these surprising announcements, until red-coated men, tired of blanks and ringing foxes, have almost said, "Dash my buttons, if I won't shut up shop here and go and hunt with these tremendous harriers," while other currant-jelly gentlemen, whose hares dance the fandango before their plodding pack, have sighed for some of these wonderful "Jacks" that never make a curve, or some of the astonishing hounds that have such a knack at making them fly.

Well, but the reader will, perhaps, say it's the blood that does it—the Major has an unrivalled, unequalled strain of harrier blood that nobody else can procure. Nothing of the sort! Nothing of the sort! The Major's blood is just anything he can get. He never misses a chance of selling either a single hound or a pack, and has emptied his kennel over and over again. But then he always knows where to lay hands on more; and as soon as ever the new hounds cross his threshold they become the very "best in the world"—better than any he ever had before. They then figure upon paper, just as if it was a continuous pack; and the field being under pretty good command, and, moreover, implicated in the honour of their performances, the thing goes on smoothly and well, and few are any the wiser. There is nothing so popular as a little fuss and excitement, in which every man may take his share, and this it is that makes scratch packs so celebrated. Their followers see nothing but their perfections. They are

"To their faults a little blind,
And to their virtues ever kind."

At the period of which we are writing, the Major's pack was rather better than usual, being composed of the pick of three

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packs—"cries of dogs" rather—viz., the Corkycove harriers, kept by the shoemakers of Waxley; the Bogtrotter harriers (four couple), kept by some moor-edge miners; the Dribbleford dogs, upon whom nobody would pay the tax; and of some two or three couple of incurables, that had been consigned from different kennels on condition of the Major returning the hampers in which they came.

The Major was open to general consignments in the canine line—Hounds, Pointers, Setters, Terriers, &c.—not being of George the Third's way of thinking, who used to denounce all "presents that eat." He would take anything; anything, at least, except a Greyhound, an animal that he held in mortal abhorrence. What he liked best was to get a Lurcher, for which he soon found a place under a pear-tree.

The Major's huntsman, old Solomon, was coachman, shepherd, groom, and game-keeper, as well as huntsman, and was the cockaded gentleman who drove the ark on the occasion of our introduction. In addition to all this, he waited at table on grand occasions, and did a little fishing, hay-making, and gardening in the summer. He was one of the old-fashioned breed of servants, now nearly extinct, who passed their lives in one family and turned their hands to whatever was wanted. The Major, whose maxim was not to keep any cats that didn't catch mice, knowing full well that all gentlemen's servants can do double the work of their places, provided they only get paid for it, resolved, that it was cheaper to pay one man the wages of one-and-a-half to do the work of two men, than to keep two men to do the same quantity; consequently, there was very little hissing at bits and curb-chains in the Major's establishment, the hard work of other places being the light work, or no work at all, of his. Solomon was the *beau idéal* of a harrier huntsman, being, as the French say, *d'un certain âge*, quiet, patient, and a pusillanimous rider.

Now about the subscription.

It is true that the Major did not take a subscription in the common acceptation of the term, but he took assistance in various ways, such as a few days' ploughing from one man, a

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few "bowels" of seed-wheat from another, a few "bowels" of seed-oats from a third, a lamb from a fourth, a pig from a fifth, added to which he had all the hounds walked during the summer, so that his actual expenses were very little more than the tax. This he jockeyed by only returning about two-thirds the number of hounds he kept; and as twelve couple were his hunting maximum, his taxing minimum would be about eight—eight couple—or sixteen hounds, at twelve shillings a-piece, is nine pound twelve, for which sum he made more noise in the papers than the Quorn, the Belvoir, and the Cottesmore all put together. Indeed the old adage of "great cry and little wool," applies to packs as well as flocks, for we never see hounds making a great "to do" in the papers without suspecting that they are either good for nothing, or that the fortunate owner wants to sell them.

With regard to horses, the Major, like many people, had but one sort—the best in England—though they were divided into two classes, viz., hunters and draught horses. Hacks or carriage horses he utterly eschewed. Horses must either hunt or plough with him; nor was he above putting his hunters into the harrows occasionally. Hence he always had a pair of efficient horses for his carriage when he wanted them, instead of animals that were fit to jump out of their skins at starting, and ready to slip through them on coming home.

Clothing he utterly repudiated for carriage horses, alleging, that people never get any work out of them after they are once clothed.

The hunters were mostly sedate, elderly animals, horses that had got through the "morning of life" with the foxhounds, and came to the harriers in preference to harness. The Major was always a buyer or an exchanger, or a mixer of both, and would generally "advance a little" on the neighbouring job-master's prices. Then having got them, he recruited the veterans by care and crushed corn, which, with cutting their tails, so altered them, that sometimes their late groom scarcely knew them again.

Certainly, if the animals could have spoken, they would have

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expressed their surprise at the different language the Maior held as a buyer and as a seller ; as a buyer, when like Gil Blas' mule, he made them out to be all faults, as a seller when they suddenly seemed to become paragons of perfection. He was always ready for a deal, and would accommodate matters to people's convenience—take part cash, part corn, part hay, part anything, for he was a most miscellaneous barterer, and his stable loft was like a marine store dealer's shop. Though always boasting that his little white hands were not "soiled with trade," he would traffic in anything (on the sly) by which he thought he could turn a penny. His last effort in the buying way had nearly got him into the County Court, as the following correspondence will show, as also how differently two people can view the same thing.

Being in town, with wheat at 80s. and barley and oats in proportion, and consequently more plethoric in the pocket than usual, he happened to stray into a certain great furniture mart where two chairs struck him as being cheap. They were standing together, and one of them was thus ticketed.

<p>No. 8205. 2 ELIZABETHAN CHAIRS, INDIA JAPANNED, 43s.</p>

The Major took a good stare at them, never having seen any before. Well, he thought they could not be dear at that ; little more than a guinea each. Get them home for fifty shillings, say. There was a deal of gold, and lacker, and varnish about them. Coloured bunches of flowers, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, Chinese temples, with "insolent pig-tailed barbarians," in pink silk jackets, with baggy blue trowsers, and gig whips in their hands, looking after the purple ducks on the pea-green lake—all very elegant.

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He'd have them, dashed if he wouldn't! Would try and swap them for Mrs. Rocket Larkspur's Croydon basket-carriage that the girls wanted. Just the things to tickle her fancy. So he went into the office and gave his card most consequentially, with a reference to Pannell, the saddler in Spur Street, Leicester Square, desiring that the chairs might be most carefully packed and forwarded to him by the goods train with an invoice by post.

When the invoice came, behold! the 43s. had changed into 86s.

"Hilloa!" exclaimed the astonished Major. "This won't do! 86s. is twice 43s.;" and he wrote off to say they had made a mistake. This brought the secretary of the concern, Mr. Badbill, on to the scene. He replied beneath a copious shower of arms, orders, flourish, and flannel, that the mistake was the Major's—that they "never marked their goods in pairs," to which the Major rejoined that they had in this instance, as the ticket which he forwarded to Pannell for Badbill's inspection showed, and that he must decline the chairs at double the price they were ticketed for.

Badbill, having duly inspected the ticket, retorted that he was surprised at the Major's stupidity, that two meant one, in fact, all the world over.

The Major rejoined that he didn't know what the Reform Bill might have done, but that two didn't mean one when he was at school; and added that as he declined the chairs at 86s. they were at Badbill's service for sending for.

Badbill wrote in reply—

"We really cannot understand how it is possible for any one to make out that a ticket on an article includes the other that may stand next it. Certainly the ticket you allude to referred only to the chair on which it was placed."

And in a subsequent letter he claimed to have the chairs repacked at the Major's expense, as it was very unfair saddling them with the loss arising entirely from the Major's mistake.

To which our gallant friend rejoined, "that as he would neither admit that the mistake was his, nor submit to the

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imputation of unfairness, he would stick to the chairs at the price they were ticketed at."

Badbill then wrote that this declaration surprised them much—that they did not for a moment think he "intentionally misunderstood the ticket as referring to a pair of chairs, whereas it only gave the price of one chair," and again begged to have them back; to which the Major inwardly responded, he "wished they might get them," and sent them an order for the 43s.

This was returned with expressions of surprise, that after the explanation given, the Major should persevere in the same "course of error," and hoped that he would, without further delay, favour the Co. with the right amount, for which Badbill said they "anxiously waited," and for which the Major inwardly said, they "might wait."

In due time came a lithographed circular, more imposingly flourished and flannelled than ever, stating the terms of the firm were "cash on delivery;" and that unless the Major remitted without further delay, he would be handed over to their solicitor, &c.; with an intimation at the bottom, that that was the "third application"—of which our gallant friend took no notice.

Next came a written—

"SIR,

"I am desired by this firm to inform you, that unless we hear from you by return of post respecting the payment of our account, we shall place the matter in the hands of our solicitors without further notice, and regret you should have occasioned us so much trouble through your own misunderstanding."

Then came the climax. The Major's solicitor went, ticket in hand, and tendered the 43s., when the late bullying Badbill was obliged to write as follows:—

"It appears you are quite correct respecting the ticket, and we are in error. Our ticketing clerk had placed the figure in the wrong part of the card, the figure 'two' referring to the number of chairs in stock, and not as understood to signify two

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chairs for 43s.;" and Badbill humorously concluded by expressing a hope that the Major would return the chairs and continue his custom—two very unlikely events, as we daresay the reader will think, to happen.

Such, then, was the knowing gentleman who now sought the company of Fine Billy; and considering that he is to be besieged on both sides, we hope to be excused for having gone a little into his host and hostess's pedigree and performances.

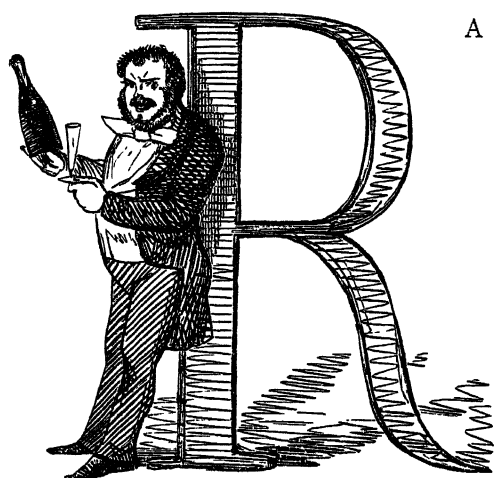
The Major wrote Billy a well-considered note, saying, that when he could spare a few days from his lordship and the foxhounds, it would afford Mrs. Yammerton and himself great pleasure if he would come and pay them a visit at Yammerton Grange, and the Major would be happy to mount him, and keep his best country for him, and show him all the sport in his power, adding, that they had been having some most marvellous runs lately—better than any he ever remembered.

Now, independently of our friend Billy having pondered a good deal on the beauty of the young lady's eyes, he could well spare a few days from the foxhounds, for his lordship, being quite de Glancey-cured, and wishing to get rid of him, had had him out again, and put him on to a more fractious horse than before, who after giving him a most indefinite shaking, had finally shot him over his head.

The Earl was delighted, therefore, when he heard of the Major's invitation, and after expressing great regret at the idea of losing our Billy, begged he would "come back whenever it suited him;" well knowing that if he once got him out of the house, he would be very sly if he got in again. And so Billy, who never answered Mamma's repeated inquiries if there were any "Miss H.'s," engaged himself to Yammerton Grange, whither the reader will now perhaps have the kindness to accompany him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR HERO ARRIVES AT YAMMERTON GRANGE.



"A regular Valley-de-chambre."

A I L W A Y S have taken the starch out of country magnificence, as well as out of town.

Time was when a visitor could hardly drive up to a great man's door in the country in a po'chay—now it would be considered very magnificent—a 'bus, or a one-'oss fly being more likely the conveyance.

The RICHEST COMMONER IN ENGLAND took his departure from Tantivy Castle in a one-horse fly, into which he was assisted by an immense retinue of servants. It was about time for him to be gone, for Mons. Jean Rougier had been what he called "boxaing" with the Earl's big watcher, Stephen Stout, to whom having given a most elaborate licking, the rest of the establishment were up in arms, and would most likely have found a match for Monsieur among them. Jack—that is to say, Mons. Jean—now kissed his hand, and grinned, and bowed, and *bon-jour'd* them from the box of the fly, with all the affability of a gentleman who has had the best of it.

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Off then they ground at as good a trot as the shaky old quadruped could raise.

It is undoubtedly a good sound principle that Major and Mrs. Yammerton went upon, never to invite people direct from great houses to theirs; it dwarfs little ones so. A few days' ventilation at a country inn with its stupid dirty waiters, copper-showing plate, and wretched cookery, would be a good preparation, only no one ever goes into an inn in England that can help it. Still, coming down from a first-class nobleman's castle to a third-class gentleman's house, was rather a trial upon the latter. Not that we mean to say anything disrespectful of Yammerton Grange, which, though built at different times, was good, roomy, and rough-cast, with a man-boy in brown and yellow livery, who called himself the "Butler," but whom the women-servants called the "Bumbler." The above outline will give the reader a general idea of the "style of thing," as the insolvent dandy said, when he asked his creditors for a "wax candle and eau-de-Cologne" sort of allowance. Everything at the Grange of course was now put into holiday garb, both externally and internally—gravel raked, garden spruced, stables strawed, &c. All the Major's old sheep-caps, old hare-snares, old hang-locks, old hedging-gloves, pruning-knives, and implements of husbandry were thrust into the back of the drawer of the passage table, while a mixed sporting and military trophy, composed of whips, swords, and pistols, radiated round his Sunday hat against the wall above it.

The drawing-room, we need not say, underwent metamorphose, the chairs and sofas suddenly changing from rather dirty print to pea-green damask, the druggeted carpet bursting into cornucopias of fruit and gay bouquets, while a rich cover of many colours adorned the centre table, which, in turn, was covered with the proceeds of the young ladies' industry. The room became a sort of exhibition of their united accomplishments. The silver inkstand surmounted a beautiful unblemished blotting-book, fresh pens and paper stood invitingly behind, while the little dictionary was consigned, with other "sundries," to the well of the ottoman.

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As the finishing preparations were progressing, the Major and Mrs. Yammerton carried on a broken discussion as to the programme of proceedings, and as, in the Major's opinion,

"There's nothing can compare
To hunting of the hare,"

he wanted to lead off with a *gallope*, to which Mrs. Yammerton demurred. She thought it would be a much better plan to have a quiet day about the place—let the girls walk Mr. Pringle up to Prospect Hill to see the view from Eagleton Rocks, and call on Mrs. Wasperton, and show him to her ugly girls, in return for their visit with Mr. Giles Smith. The Major, on the contrary, thought if there was to be a quiet day about the place, he would like to employ it in showing Billy a horse he had to sell; but while they were in the midst of the argument the click of front gate sneck, followed by the vehement bow-wow-wow-wow-wow bark of the Skye terrier, Fury, announced an arrival, and from behind a ground-feathering spruce emerged the shaky old horse, dragging at its tail the heavily laden cab. Then there was such a scattering of crinoline below, and such a gathering of cotton above, to see the gentleman alight, and such speculations as to his Christian name, and which of the young ladies he would do for.

"I say his name's Harry!" whispered Sally Scuttle, the housemaid, into Benson's—we beg pardon—Miss Benson's, the ladies'-maid's ear, who was standing before her, peeping past the faded curtains of the chintz-room.

"I say it's John!" replied Miss Benson, now that Mr. Pringle's head appeared at the window.

"I say it's Joseph!" interposed Betty Bone, the cook, who stood behind Sally Scuttle, at which speculation they all laughed.

"Hoot, no! he's not a bit like Joseph," replied Sally, eyeing Billy as he now alighted.

"Lauk! he's quite a young gent," observed Bone.

"Young! to be sure!" replied Miss Benson; "you don't s'pose we want any old 'uns here."

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"He'll do nicely for Miss," observed Sally.

"And why not for Miss F.?" asked Benson, from whom she had just received an old gown.

"Well, either," rejoined Sally; "only Miss had the last chance."

"Oh, curates go for nothin'!" retorted Benson; "if it had been a captin it would have been something like."

"Well, but there's Miss Harriet; you never mention Miss Harriet, why shouldn't Miss Harriet have a chance?" interposed the cook.

"Oh, Miss Harriet must wait her turn. Let her sisters be served first. They can't all have him, you know, so it's no use trying."

Billy having entered the house, the ladies' attention was now directed to Monsieur.

"What a thick, plummy man he is!" observed Benson, looking down on Rougier's broad shoulders.

"He looks as if he got his vittles well," rejoined Bone, wondering how he would like their lean beef and bacon fare.

"Where will he have to sleep?" asked Sally Scuttle.

"O, with the Bumbler, to be sure," replied Bone.

"Not *he*!" interposed Miss Benson, with disdain. "You don't s'pose a reg'ler valley-de-chambre 'ill condescend to sleep with a footman! You don't know them—if you think that."

"He's got mouse catchers," observed Sally Scuttle, who had been eyeing Monsieur intently.

"Ay, and a beard like a blacking brush," whispered Bone.

"He's surely a foreigner," whispered Benson, as Monsieur's, "*I say!* take *vell* care of her!—*leeaft* her down j-e-a-ntly" (alluding to his own carpet bag, in which he had a bottle of rum enveloped in swaddling clothes of dirty linen) to the cabman, sounded upstairs.

"So he is," replied Benson, adding, after a pause, "Well, anybody may have him for me;"—saying which she tripped out of the room, quickly followed by the others.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FAMILY PARTY.



OUR Major having, on the first alarm, rushed off to his dirty Sanctum, and crowned himself with a drab felt wide-awake, next snatched a little knotty dog-whip out of the trophy as he passed, and was at the sash door of the front entrance welcoming our hero with the full spring tide of hospitality as he alighted from his fly.

The Major was overjoyed to see him. It was indeed kind of him, leaving the castle to "come and visit them in their 'umble abode." The Major, of course, now being on the humility tack.

"Let me take your cloak!" said he; "let me take your cap!" and, with the aid of the Bumbler, who came shuffling himself into his brown and yellow livery coat, Billy was eased of his wrapper, and stood before the now thrown-open drawing-room door, just as Mrs. Yammerton having swept the last brown holland cover off the reclining chair, had stuffed it under the sofa cushion. She, too, was delighted to see Billy, and thankful she had got the room ready, so as to be able presently to subside upon the sofa, "Morning Post" in hand, just as if she had been interrupted in her reading. The young ladies then dropped in one by one; Miss at the passage door, Miss Flora at the one connecting the drawing-room with the Sanctum, and Miss Harriet again at the passage door, all divested of their aprons, and fresh from their respective looking-glasses. The two former, of course, met Billy as an old acquaintance, and as they did not mean to allow Miss Harriet to participate

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in the prize, they just let her shuffle herself into an introduction as best she could. Billy wasn't quite sure whether he had seen her before or he hadn't. At first he thought he had; then he thought he hadn't; but whether he had or he hadn't, he knew there would be no harm in bowing, so he just promiscuated one to her, which she acknowledged with a best Featherery curtsy. A great cry of conversation, or rather of random observation, then ensued; in the midst of which the Major slipped out, and from his Sanctum he overheard Monsieur getting up much the same sort of entertainment in the kitchen. There was such laughing and giggling and "*he-hawing*" among the maids, that the Major feared the dinner would be neglected.

The Major's dining-room, though small, would accommodate a dozen people, or incommode eighteen, which latter number is considered the most serviceable-sized party in the country where people feed off their acquaintance, more upon the debtor and creditor system, than with a view to making pleasant parties, or considering who would like to meet. Even when they are what they call "alone," they can't be "alone," but must have in as many servants as they can raise, to show how far the assertion is from the truth.

Though the Yammertons sat down but six on the present occasion, and there were the two accustomed dumb-waiters in the room, three live ones were introduced, viz., Monsieur, the Bumbler, and Solomon, whose duty seemed to consist in cooling the victuals, by carrying them about, and in preventing people from helping themselves to what was before them, by taking the dishes off the steady table, and presenting them again on very unsteady hands.

No one is ever allowed to shoot a dish sitting if a servant can see it. How pleasant it would be if we were watched in all the affairs of life as we are in eating!

Monsieur, we may observe, had completely superseded the Bumbler, just as a colonel supersedes a captain on coming up.

"Oi am Colonel Crushington of the Royal Plungers," proclaims the Colonel, stretching himself to his utmost altitude.

"And I am Captain Succumber, of the Sugar-Candy



"SUPERSEDING THE BUMBLER."

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Huzzars," bows the Captain with the utmost humility; whereupon the Captain is snuffed out, and the Colonel reigns in his stead.

"I am Monsieur Jean Rougier, valet-de-chambre to me lor Pringle, and I sall take in de potage—de soup," observed Rougier, coming downstairs in his first-class clothes, and pushing the now yellow-legged Bumbler` aside.

And these hobble-de-hoys never being favourites with the fair, the maids saw him reduced without remorse.

So the dinner got set upon the table without a fight: and though Monsieur allowed the Bumbler to announce it in the drawing-room, it was only that he might take a suck of the sherry while he was away. But he was standing as bolt upright as a serjeant-major on parade when "me lor" entered the dining-room with Mrs. Yammerton on his arm, followed by the Graces, the Major having stayed behind to blow out the composites.

They were soon settled in their places, grace said, and the assault commenced.

The Major was rather behind Imperial John in magnificence, for John had got his plate in his drawing-room, while the Major still adhered to the good old-fashioned blue and red, and gold and green crockery ware of his youth.

Not but that both Mamma and the young ladies had often represented to him the absolute necessity of having plate, but the Major could never fall in with it at his price—that of German silver, or Britannia metal perhaps.

We daresay Fine Billy would never have noticed the deficiency, if the Major had not drawn attention to it by apologising for its absence, and fearing he would not be able to eat his dinner without; though we daresay, if the truth were known, our readers—our male readers at least—will agree with us, that a good hot well-washed china dish is a great deal better than a dull, luke-warm, hand-rubbed silver one. It's the "wittles" people look to, not the ware.

Then the Major was afraid his wine wouldn't pass muster after the Earl's, and certainly his champagne was nothing to

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boast of, being that ambiguous stuff that halts between the price of gooseberry and real; in addition to which, the Major had omitted to pay it the compliment of icing it, so that it stood forth in all its native imperfection. However, it hissed, and fizzed, and popped, and banged, which is always something exciting at all events; and as the Major sported needle-case-shaped glasses which he had got at a sale (very cheap we hope), there was no fear of people getting enough to do them any harm.

Giving champagne is one of those things that has passed into custom almost imperceptibly. Twenty, or five-and-twenty years ago, a mid-rank-of-life person giving champagne was talked of in a very shake-the-head, solemn, "I wish-it-may-last," style; now everybody gives it of some sort or other. We read in the papers the other day of ninety dozen, for which the holder had paid 400*l.*, being sold for 13*s.* 6*d.* a doz. ! What a chance that would have been for our Major. We wonder what that had been made of.

It was a happy discovery that giving champagne at dinner saved other wine after, for certainly nothing promotes the conviviality of a meeting so much as champagne, and there is nothing so melancholy and funereal as a dinner party without it. Indeed, giving champagne may be regarded as a downright promoter of temperance, for a person who drinks freely of champagne cannot drink freely of any other sort of wine after it; so that champagne may be said to have contributed to the abolition of the old port-wine toping wherewith our fathers were wont to beguile their long evenings. Indeed, light wines and London clubs have about banished inebriety from anything like good society. Enlarged newspapers, too, have contributed their quota, whereby a man can read what is passing in all parts of the world, instead of being told whose cat has kitted in his own immediate neighbourhood.—With which philosophical reflections, let us return to our party.

Although youth is undoubtedly the age of matured judgment and connoisseurship in everything, and Billy was quite as knowing as his neighbours, he accepted the Major's encomiums

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on his wine with all the confidence of ignorance, and what is more to the purpose, he drank it. Indeed, there was nothing faulty on the table that the Major didn't praise, on the old-horse-dealing principle of lauding the bad points, and leaving the good ones to speak for themselves. So the dinner progressed through a multiplicity of dishes; for, to do the ladies justice, they always give good fare:—it is the men who treat their friends to mutton chops and rice puddings.

Betty Bone, too, was a noble-hearted woman, and would undertake to cook for a party of fifty,—roasts, boils, stews, soups, sweets, savouries, sauces, and all! And so what with a pretty girl alongside of him, and two sitting opposite, Billy did uncommonly well, and felt far more at home than he did at Tantivy Castle, with the Earl and Mrs. Moffatt, and the stiff dependents his lordship brought in to dine.

The Major stopped Billy from calling for Burgundy after his cheese by volunteering a glass of home-brewed ale, “bo-bo-bottled,” he said, “when he came of age,” though, in fact, it had only arrived from Aloes, the chemist's, at Hinton, about an hour before dinner. This being only sipped, and smacked, and applauded, grace was said, the cloth removed, the Major was presently assuring Billy, in a bumper of moderate juvenile port, how delighted he was to see him, how flattered he felt by his condescension in coming to visit him at his 'umble abode, and how he 'oped to make the visit agreeable to him. This piece of flummery being delivered, the bottles and dessert circulated, and in due time the ladies retired, the Misses to the drawing-room, Madam to the pantry, to see that the Bumbler had not pocketed any of the cheese-cakes or tarts, for which, boy-like, he had a propensity.

The Major, we are ashamed to say, had no mirror in his drawing-room, wherein the ladies could now see how they had been looking; so, of course, they drew to that next attraction—the fire, which having duly stirred, Miss Yammerton and Flora laid their heads together, with each a fair arm resting on the old-fashioned grey-veined marble mantel-piece, and commenced a very laughing, whispering conversation. This, of course,

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attracted Miss Harriet, who tried first to edge in between them, and then to participate at the sides; but she was repulsed at all points, and at length was told by Miss Yammerton to "*get away!*" as she had "nothing to do with what they were talking about."

"Yes I have," pouted Miss Harriet, who guessed what the conversation was about.

"No, you haven't," retorted Miss Flora.

"It's between Flora and me," observed Miss Yammerton dryly, with an air of authority.

"Well, but that's not fair!" exclaimed Miss Harriet.

"Yes it is!" replied Miss Yammerton, throwing up her head.

"Yes it *is!*" asserted Miss Flora, supporting her elder sister's assertion.

"No, it's *not!*" retorted Miss Harriet.

"You weren't there at the beginning," observed Miss Yammerton, alluding to the expedition to Tantivy Castle.

"That was not my fault," replied Miss Harriet firmly; "Pa would go in the coach."

"Never mind, you were *not* there," replied Miss Yammerton tartly.

"Well, but I'll *ask mamma* if that's fair?" rejoined Miss Harriet, hurrying out of the room.

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followed by the rustling of silks, and the light tread of airy steps hurrying along the passage, and stopping at the partially-opened door. Presently increased light in the apartment was succeeded by less rustle and tip-toe treads passing the bed, and making up to the looking-glass. The self-inspection being over, candles were then flashed about the room in various directions; and Jack having now thrown all his energies into his ears, overheard the following *sotto voce* exclamations:—

First Voice. “Lauk! what a little dandy it is!”

Second Voice. “Look, I say! look as his boots—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten: ten pair, as I live, besides jacks and tops.”

First Voice. “And shoes in proportion,” the speaker running her candle along the line of various patterned shoes.

Second Voice. (Advancing to the toilette-table.) “Let’s look at his studs. Wot an assortment! Wonder if those are diamonds or paste he has on.”

First Voice. “Oh, *diamonds* to be sure” (with an emphasis on diamonds). “You don’t s’pose such a little swell as that would wear paste. See! there’s a pearl and diamond ring. Just fits me, I do declare,” added she, trying it on.

Second Voice. “What beautiful carbuncle pins!”

First Voice. “Oh, what studs!”

Second Voice. “Oh, what chains!”

First Voice. “Oh, what pins!”

Second Voice. “Oh, what a love of a ring!” And so the ladies continued, turning the articles hastily over. “Oh, how happy he *must* be,” sighed a languishing voice, as the inspection proceeded.

“See! here’s his little silver shaving box,” observed the first speaker, opening it.

“Wonder what *he* wants with a shaving box,—got no more beard than I have,” replied the other, taking up Billy’s badger-hair shaving-brush, and applying it to her own pretty chin.

“Oh! smell what delicious perfume!” now exclaimed the discoverer of the shaving-box. “Essence of Rondeletia, I do



"LOOK AT HIS BOOTS."

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believe! No, *extrait de millefleurs*," added she, scenting her kerchief with some.

Then there was a hurried, frightened "*hush!*" followed by a "Take care that ugly man of his doesn't come."

"Did you ever *see* such a monster!" ejaculated the other earnestly.

"Kept his horrid eyes fixed upon me the whole dinner," observed the first speaker.

"Frights they are," rejoined the other.

"He must keep him for a foil," suggested the first.

"Let's go, or we'll be caught!" replied the alarmist; and forthwith the rustling of silks was resumed, the candles hurried past, and the ladies tripped softly out of the room, leaving the door ajar, with Jack under the bed to digest their compliments at his leisure.

But Monsieur was too many for them. Miss had dropped her glove at the foot of the bed, which Jack found on emerging from his hiding-place, and waiting till he had the whole party re-assembled at tea, he walked majestically into the middle of the drawing-room with it extended on a plated tray, his "horrid eyes" combining all the venom of a Frenchman with the *hauteur* of an Englishman, and inquired in a loud and audible voice, "Please, has any lady or shentleman lost its glo-o-ve?"

"Yes, I have!" replied Miss, hastily, who had been wondering where she had dropped it.

"Indeed, marm," replied Monsieur, bowing and presenting it to her on the tray, adding, in a still louder voice, "I FOUND IT IN MONSIEUR PRINGLE'S BED-ROOM." And Jack's flashing eye saw by the brightly-colouring girls which were the offenders.

Very much shocked was Mamma at the announcement; and the young ladies were so put about that they could scarcely compose themselves at the piano, while Miss Harriet's voice soared exultingly as she accompanied herself on the harp.



At 'Le M. Centre-Temps'—Jack, Roger, and the 'Globe'

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MAJOR'S STUD.



RS. YAMMERTON carried the day, and the young ladies carried paper-booted Billy, or rather walked him up to Mrs. Wasperton's at Prospect Hill, and showed him the ugly girls, and also the beautiful view from Eagle-ton Rocks, over the wide spreading vale of

Vernerley beyond, which, of course, Billy enjoyed amazingly, as all young gentlemen do enjoy views under such pleasant circumstances. Perhaps he might have enjoyed it more, if two out of three of the dear charmers had been absent, but then things had not got to that pass, and Mamma would not have thought it proper—at least, not unless she saw her way to a very decided preference—which, of course, was then out of the question. Billy was a great swell, and the “chaws” who met him stared with astonishment at such an elegant parasol'd exquisite, picking his way daintily along the dirty, sloppy, ruddy lanes. Like all gentlemen in similar circumstances, he declared his boots “wouldn't take in wet.”

Of course, Mamma charged the girls not to be out late, an injunction that applied as well to precaution against the night air as to the importance of getting Billy back by afternoon stable time when the Major purposed treating him to a sight of his stud, and trying to lay the foundation of a sale.

Perhaps our sporting readers would like to take a look into the Major's stable before he comes with his victim, Fine Billy. If so, let them accompany us, meanwhile our lady friends can skip the chapter if they do not like to read about horses—or

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here; if they will step this way, and here comes the Dairy-maid, they can look at the cows: real Durham short-horns, with great milking powers, and most undeniable pedigrees. Ah, we thought they would tickle your fancy. The cow is to the lady what the horse is to the gentleman, or, on the score of usefulness, what hare hunting is to fox hunting—or shooting to hunting. Master may have many horses pulled backwards out of his stable without exciting half the commiseration among the fair, that the loss of one nice quiet milk-giving cushy cow affords. Cows are friendly creatures. They remember people longer than almost any other animal, dogs not excepted. Well, here are four of them, Old Lily, Strawberry Cream, Red Rose, and Toy; the house is clean and sweet, and smells of milk and well-made hay, instead of the nasty brown-coloured snuff-smelling stuff that some people think good enough for the poor cow.

The Major is proud of his cows, and against the whitewashed wall he has pasted the description of a perfect one, in order that people may compare the originals with the portrait. Thus it runs:—

She's long in the face, she's fine in the horn,
She'll quickly get fat without cake or corn,
She's clean in her jaws, and full in her chine,
She's heavy in flank, and wide in her loin,
She broad in her ribs, and long in her rump,
A straight and flat back without ever a hump,
She's wide in her hips, and calm in her eyes,
She's fine in her shoulders, and thin in her thighs;
She's light in her neck, and small in her tail,
She's wide at the breast, and good at the pail,
She's fine in her bone and silky of skin,
She's a grazier's without, and a butcher's within.

Now for the stable; this way, through the saddle-room, and mind the whitening on the walls. Stoop your head, for the Major being low himself, has made the door on the principle of all other people being low too. There, there you are, you see, in a stable as neat and clean as a London dealer's; a New-market straw plait, a sanded floor with a roomy bench against the wall on which the Major kicks his legs and stutters forth

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the merits of his steeds. They are six in number, and before he comes we will just run the reader through the lot, with the aid of truth for an accompaniment.

This grey, or rather white one next the wall, White Surrey, as he calls him, is the old quivering-tailed horse he rode on the de Glancey day, and pulled up to save, from the price-depressing inconvenience of being beat. He is eighteen years old, the Major having got him when he was sixteen, in a sort of part purchase, part swap, part barter deal. He gave young Mr. Meggison of Spoonbill Park thirteen pounds ten shillings, an old mahogany pianoforte, by Broadwood, six and a half octaves, a squirrel-cage, two sun-blinds, and a very feeble old horse called Nonpareil, that Tom Rivett, the blacksmith, declared it would be like robbing Meggison to put new shoes on to, for him. He is a game, good shaped old horse, but having frequently in the course of a chequered career, been in that hardest of all hard places, the hands of young single horse owners, White Surrey has done the work of three or four horses. He has been fired and blistered, and blistered and fired, till his legs are as round and as callous as those of a mahogany dining-table; still it is wonderful how they support him, and as he has never given the Major a fall, he rides him as if he thought he never would. His price is sometimes fifty, sometimes forty, sometimes thirty, and there are times when he might be bought for a little less—two sovereigns, perhaps, returned out of the thirty. The next one to him—the white legged brown—is of the antediluvian order too. He is now called Woodpecker, but he may be traced by half-a-dozen aliases through other stables—Buckhunter, Captain Tart, Fleacatcher, Sportsman, Marc Anthony, &c. He is nearly, if not quite, thorough bred, and the ignoble purposes to which he has been subjected, false-start making, steeple-chasing, flat and hurdle racing, accounts for the number of his names. The Major got him from Captain Caret, of the Apple-pie huzzars, when that gallant regiment was ordered out to India—taking him all away together, saddle, bridle, clothing, &c., for twenty-three

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pounds, a strong iron-bound chest, fit for sea purposes, as the Major described it, and a spying-glass. This horse, like all the rest of them, indeed, is variously priced, depending upon the party asking, sometimes fifty, sometimes five-and-twenty would buy him.

The third is a mare, a black mare, called Star, late the property of Mr. Hazey, the horse-dealing master of the Squeezington hounds. Hazey sold her in his usual course of horse-dealing cheating to young Mr. Sprigginson, of Marygold Lodge, for a hundred and twenty guineas (the shillings back), Hazey's discrimination enabling him to see that she was turning weaver, and Sprigginson not liking her, returned her on the warranty; when, of course, Hazey refusing to receive her, she was sent to the Eclipse Livery and Bait Stables at Hinton, where, after weaving her head off, she was sold at the hammer to the Major for twenty-nine pounds. Sprig then brought an action against Hazey for the balance, bringing half-a-dozen witnesses to prove that she wove when she came; Hazey, of course, bringing a dozen to swear that she never did nothin' o' the sort with him, and must have learnt it on the road; and the jury being perplexed, and one of them having a cow to calve, another wanting to see his sweetheart, and the rest wanting their dinners, they just tossed up for it, "Heads!" for Sprig; "Tails!" for Hazey, and Sprig won. There she goes, you see, weaving backwards and forwards like a caged panther in a den. Still she is far from being the worst that the Major has; indeed, we are not sure that she is not about the best, only, as Solomon says, with reference to her weaving, she gets the "langer the warser."

Number four is a handsome whole coloured bright bay horse, "Napoleon the Great," as the Major calls him, in hopes that his illustrious name will sell him, for of all bad tickets he ever had, the Major thinks Nap is the worst. At starting, he is all fire, frisk, and emulation, but before he has gone five miles, he begins to droop, and in hunting knocks up entirely before he has crossed half-a-dozen fields. He is a weak, watery, washy creature, wanting no end of coddling, boiled corn, and linseed

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tea. One hears of two days a-week horses, but Napoleon the Great is a day in two weeks one. The reader will wonder how the Major came to get such an animal, still more how he came to keep him; above all, how he ever came to have him twice. The mystery, however, is explained on the old bartering, huckstering, half-and-half system. The Major got him first from Tom Brandysneak, a low public-house keeping leather-plater, one of those sporting men, not sportsmen, who talk about supporting the turf, as if they did it like the noblemen of old, upon principle, instead of for what they can put into their own pockets; and the Major gave Sneak an old green dog-cart, a melon frame, sixteen volumes of the "Racing Calendar," bound in calf, a ton of seed-hay, fifty yards of Croggon's asphalt roofing-felt, and three "golden sovereigns" for him. Nap was then doing duty under the title of Johnny Raw, his calling being to appear at different posts whenever the cruel conditions of a race required a certain number of horses to start in order to secure the added money; but Johnny enacted that office so often for the benefit of the "Honourable Society of Confederated Legs," that the stewards of races framed their conditions for excluding him; and Johnny's occupation being gone, he came to the Major in manner aforesaid. Being, however, a horse of prepossessing appearance, a good bay, with four clean black legs, a neat well set-on head, with an equally neat set-on tail, a flowing mane, and other et ceteras, he soon passed into the possession of young Mr. Tabberton, of Green Linnet Hill, whose grandmamma had just given him a hundred guineas wherewith to buy a good horse—a *real* good one he was to be—a hundred-guinea-one in fact. Tabberton soon took all the gay insolence out of Johnny's tail, and brought him back to the Major, sadly dilapidated—a sad satire upon his former self.

Meanwhile the Major had filled up his stall with a handsome rich-coloured brown mare, with a decidedly doubtful fore-leg; and the Major, all candour and affability, readily agreed to exchange, on condition of getting five-and-twenty pounds to boot. The mare presently went down to exercise, confirming

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the Major's opinion of the instability of her leg, and increasing his confidence in his own judgment. Napoleon the Great, late Johnny Raw, now reigns in her stead, and very well he looks in the straw. Indeed, that is his proper place; and as many people only keep their horses to look at, there is no reason why Napoleon the Great should remain in the Major's stables. He certainly won't if the Major can help it.

Number five is a vulgar-looking little dun-duck-et-y mud-coloured horse, with long white stockings, and a large white face, called Bull-dog, that Solomon generally rides. Nobody knows how old he is, or how many masters he has had, or where he came from, or who his father was, or whether he had a grandfather, or anything whatever about him. The Major got him for a mere nothing—nine pounds—at Joe Seton's, the runaway Vet's sale, about five years ago, and being so desperately ugly and common looking, no one has ever attempted to deprive the Major of him either in the way of barter or sale. Still Bully is a capital slave, always ready either to hunt, or hack, or go in harness, and will pass anything except a public-house, being familiarly and favourably known at the doors of every one in the county. Like most horses, he has his little peculiarity; and his consists of a sort of rheumatic affection of the hind leg, which causes him to catch it up, and sends him limping along on three legs, like a lame dog, but still he never comes down, and the attack soon goes off. Solomon and he look very like their work together.

The next horse to Bull-dog, and the last in the stable, is Golden-drop, a soft, mealy chestnut—of all colours the most objectionable. He is a hot, pulling, hauling, rushing, rough-actioned animal, that gives a rider two days' exercise in one.

The worst of him is, he has the impudence to decline harness; for though he doesn't "mill," as they call it, he yet runs backwards as fast as forwards, and would crash through a plate-glass window, a gate, a conservatory, or anything else that happened to be behind. As a hack he is below

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mediocrity, for in his walk he digs his toes into the ground about every tenth step, and either comes down on his nose, or sets off at score for fear of a licking, added to which he shies at every heap of stones and other available object on the road, whereby he makes a ten miles' journey into one of twelve. The Major got him of Mr. Brisket, the butcher, at Hinton, being taken with the way in which his hatless lad spun him about the ill-paved streets, with the meat-basket on his arm—the full trot, it may be observed, being the animal's pace—but having got him home, the more the Major saw of him the less he liked him. He had a severe deal for him too, and made two or three journeys over to Hinton on market days, and bought a pennyworth of whipcord of one saddler, a set of spur-leathers of another, a pot of harness-paste of a third, in order to pump them about the horse ere he ventured to touch. He also got Mr. Paul Straddler, the disengaged gentleman of the place, whose greatest pleasure is to be employed upon a deal, to ferret out all he could about him, who reported that the horse was perfectly sound, and a capital feeder, which indeed he is, for he will attack anything, from a hayband down to a hedge-stake. You see he's busy on his bedding now.

Brisket knowing his man, and that the Major killed his own mutton, and occasionally beef, in the winter, so that there was no good to be got of him in the meat way, determined to ask a stiff price, viz., 25*l.* (Brisket having given 14*l.*), which the Major having beat down to 23*l.*, commenced on the mercantile line, which Brisket's then approaching marriage favoured, and the Major ultimately gave a four-post mahogany bedstead, with blue damask furniture, palliasse and mattress to match; a mahogany toilette-mirror, 23 inches by 28; a hot-water pudding-dish, a silved-edged cake-basket, a bad barometer, a child's birch-wood crib, a chess-board, and 2*l.* 10*s.* in cash for him, the 2*l.* 10*s.* being, as the Major now declares (to himself, of course,) far more than his real worth. However, there the horse stands; and though he has been down twice with the Major, and once with the Bumbler, these little forepaws (*faux pas*), as the Major calls them, have been on the soft, and the

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knees bear no evidence of the fact. Such is our friend's present stud, and such is its general character.

But stay! We are omitting the horse in this large family pew-looking box at the end, whose drawn curtains have caused us to overlook him. He is another of the Major's bad tickets, and one of which he has just become possessed in the following way:—

Having—in furtherance of his character of a “thorrer sportsman,” and to preserve the spirit of impartiality so becoming an old master of “haryers”—gone to Sir Moses Mainchance's opening day, as well as to my Lord's, Sir Moses, as if in appreciation of the compliment, had offered to give the horse on which his second whip was blundering among the blind ditches.

The Major jumped at the offer, for the horse looked well with the whip on him; and, as he accepted, Sir Moses increased the stream of his generosity by engaging the Major to dine and take him away. Sir Moses had a distinguished party to meet him, and was hospitality itself. He plied our Major with champagne, and hock, and Barsac, and Sauterne, and port, and claret, and compliments, but never alluded to the horse until about an hour after dinner, when Mr. Smoothley, the jackal of the hunt, brought him on the *tapis*.

“Ah!” exclaimed Sir Moses, as if in sudden recollection, “that's true! Major, you're quite welcome to ‘Little-bo-peep’” (for so he had christened him, in order to account for his inquisitive manner of peering). “You're *quite* welcome to ‘Little-bo-peep,’ and I hope he'll be useful to you.”

“Thank'e, Sir Moses, thank'e!” bobbed the grateful Major, thinking what a good chap the baronet was.

“*Not a bit!*” replied Sir Moses, chucking up his chin, just as if he was in the habit of giving a horse away every other day in the week. “*Not a bit!* Keep him as long as you like—all the season if you please—and send him back when you are done.”

Then, as if in deprecation of any more thanks, he plied the wine again, and gave the Major and his “harriers” in a speech of great gammonosity. The Major was divided between

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mortification at the reduction of the gift into a loan, and gratification at the compliment now paid him, but was speedily comforted by the flattering reception his health, and the stereotyped speech in which he returned thanks, met at the hands of the company. He thought he must be very popular. Then, when they were all well wined, and had gathered round the sparkling fire with their coffee or their Curaçoa in their hands, Sir Moses button-holed the Major with a loud familiar, "I'll tell ye what, Yammerton! you're a devilish good feller, and there shall be no obligation between us—you shall just give me forty puns for 'Little-bo-peep,' and that's making you a present of him, for it's a hundred less than I gave."

"Ah! that's the way to do it!" exclaimed Mr. Smoothley, as if delighted at Sir Moses' having dropped upon the right course. "Ah! *that's* the way to do it!" repeated he, swinging himself gaily round on his toe, with a loud snap of his finger and thumb in the air.

And Sir Moses said it in such a kind, considerate, matter-of-course sort of way, before company too, and Smoothley clenched it so neatly, that our wine-flushed Major, acute as he is, hadn't presence of mind to say "No." So he was saddled with "Little-bo-peep," who has already lost one eye from cataract, which is fast going with the other.

But see! Here comes Solomon followed by the Bumbler in fustian, and the boy from the farm, and we shall soon have the Major and Billy, so let us step into Bo-peep's box, and hear the Major's description of his stud.

* * * * *

Scarcely have the grooms dispersed the fast-gathering gloom of a November afternoon, by lighting the mould candles in the cord-suspended lanterns slung along the ceiling, and began to hiss at the straw, when the Major entered, with our friend Billy at his heels. The Bumbler and Chaw then put on extra activity, and the stable being presently righted, heads were loosened, water supplied, and the horses excited by Solomon's well-known peregrination to the crushed corn-bin. All ears

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were then pricked, eyes cast back, and hind-quarters tucked under to respond gaily to the "come over" of the feeder.

The late watchful whinnying restlessness is succeeded by gulping, diving, energetic eating. Our friend having passed his regiment of horses in silent review, while the hissing was going on, now exchanges a few confidential words with the stud groom, as if he left everything to him, and then passes upwards to where he started from. Solomon having plenty to do elsewhere, presently retires, followed by his helpers, and the Major and Billy seat themselves on the bench. After a few puffs and blows of the cheeks and premonitory jerks of the legs, the Major nods an approving "nice 'oss, that," to Napoleon the Great, standing opposite, who is the first to look up from his food, being with it as with his work, always in a desperate hurry to begin, and in an equally great one to leave off.

"Nice 'oss, that," repeats the Major, nodding again.

"Yarse, he looks like a nice 'orse," replied Billy, which is really as much as any man can say under the circumstances.

"That 'oss should have won the D-d-d-derby in Nobbler's year," observed the Major; "only they d-d-drugged him the night before starting, and he didn't get half round the c-c-co-course," which was true enough, only it wasn't owing to any drugging, for he wasn't worth the expense.

"That 'oss should be in Le-le-le-leicestershire," observed the Major. "He has all the commandin' s-s-s-statur requisite to make large fences look s-s-s-small, and the s-s-s-smoothest, oiliest action i-ma-ma-maginable."

"Yarse," replied Billy, wondering what pleasure there was in looking at a lot of blankets and hoods upon horses—which was about all he could see.

"He should be at Me-me-melton," observed the Major, still harping on Napoleon—"wasted upon haryers," added he.

"Yarse," replied Billy, not caring where he was.

The Major then took a nod at the Weaver, who, as if in aid of her master's design, now stood bolt upright, listening, as it were, instead of reeling from side to side.

"That's a sw-sw-swe-e-t mare," observed the Major, wishing



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he was rid of her. "I don't know whether I would rather have her or the horse (Nap);" which was true enough, though he knew which he would like to sell Billy.

"You'll remember the g-g-gray, the whi-white," continued he, looking in at the old stager against the wall. "That's the 'oss I rode with the Peer, on the Castle day, and an undeniable g-g-good one he is:" but knowing that he was not a young man's horse—moreover, not wanting to sell him, he returned to Napoleon, whose praises he again sounded considerably. Billy, however, having heard enough about him, and wanting to get into the house to the ladies, drew his attention to Bull-dog, now almost enveloped in blankets and straw; but the Major, not feeling inclined to waste any words on him either, replied, "That he was only a servant's 'oss." He, however, spoke handsomely of Golden-drop, declaring he was the fastest trotter in England, perhaps in Europe, perhaps in the world, and would be invaluable to a D-d-doctor, or any man who wanted to get over the ground. And then, thinking he had said about enough for a beginning, it all at once occurred to him that Billy's feet must be wet, and though our friend asserted most confidently that they were not, as all townsmen do assert who walk about the country in thin soles, the Major persisted in urging him to go in and change, which Billy at length reluctantly assented to do.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CARDS FOR A SPREAD.



Writing "the Invites."

HE Major's ménage not admitting of two such great events as a hunt and a dinner party taking place on the same day, and market interfering as well, the hunt again had to be postponed to the interests of the table. Such an event as a distinguished stranger—the friend of an Earl, too—coming into the country

could not but excite convivial expectations, and it would ill become a master of hounds and a mother of daughters not to parade the acquisition. Still, raising a party under such circumstances, required a good deal of tact and consideration, care, of course, being taken not to introduce any matrimonial competitor, at the same time to make the gathering sufficiently grand, and to include a good bellman or two to proclaim its splendour over the country. The Major, like a county member with his constituents, was somewhat hampered with his hounds, not being able to ask exactly who he liked, for fear of being hauled over the coals, viz., warned off the land of those who

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might think they ought to have been included, and altogether, the party required a good deal of management. Inclination in these matters is not of so much moment, it being no uncommon thing in the country for people to abuse each other right well one day, and dine together the next. The "gap" which the Major prized so much with his hounds, he strongly objected to with his parties.

Stopping gaps, indeed, sending out invitations at all in the country, so as not to look like stopping gaps, requires circumspection, where people seem to have nothing whatever to do but to note their neighbours' movements. Let any one watch the progress of an important trial, one for murder say, and mark the wonderful way in which country people come forward, long after the event, to depose to facts, that one would imagine would never have been noticed—the passing of a man with a cow, for instance, just as they dropped their noses upon their bacon plates, the suspension of payment by their clock, on that morning, or the post messenger being a few minutes late with the letters on that day, and so on. What then is there to prevent people from laying that and that together, where John met James, or Michael saw Mary, so as to be able to calculate whether they were included in the first, second, or third batch of invitations? Townspeople escape this difficulty, as also the equally disagreeable one of having it known whether their "previous engagements" are real or imaginary; but then, on the other hand, they have the inconvenience of feeling certain, that as sure as ever they issue cards for a certain day, every one else will be seized with a mania for giving dinners on the same one. No one can have an idea of the extent of London hospitality—who has not attempted to give a dinner there. Still, it is a difficult world to please, even in the matter of mastication, for some people who abuse you if you don't ask them to dine, abuse you quite as much if you do. Take the Reverend Mr. Tightlace, the rector, and his excellent lady, for instance. Tightlace was always complaining, at least observing, that the Yammertons never asked them to dine—wondered "*why* the Yammertons never asked them to dine, was very

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odd they never asked them to dine," and yet, when Miss Yammerton's best copper-plate handwriting appeared on the highly-musked best cream-laid satin note-paper, "requesting, &c.," Tightlace pretended to be quite put out at the idea of having to go to meet that wild sporting youth, who, "he'd be bound to say, could talk of nothing but hunting." Indeed, having most reluctantly accepted the invitation, he found it necessary to cram for the occasion, and having borrowed a copy of that veteran volume, the "British Sportsman," he read up all the long chapter on racing and hunting, how to prepare a horse for a hunting match or plate; directions for riding a hunting match or plate; of hunting the hare, and hunting the fox, with directions for the choice of a hunter, and the management of a hunter; part of which latter consisted in putting him to grass between May and Bartholomew-tide, and comforting his stomach before going out to hunt with toasted bread and wine, or toasted bread and ale, and other valuable information of that sort—all of which Tightlace stored in his mind for future use—thinking to reduce his great intellect to the level of Billy's capacity.

Mr and Mrs. Rocket Larkspur, of Ninian Green, were also successfully angled for and caught; indeed, Mrs. Larkspur would have been much disappointed if they had not been invited, for she had heard of Billy's elegant appearance from her maid, and being an aspiring lady, had a great desire to cultivate an acquaintance with high life, in which Billy evidently moved. Rocket was a good slow sort of gentleman-farmer, quite a contrast to his fast wife, who was all fire, bustle, and animation, wanting to manage everybody's house and affairs for them. He had married her, it was supposed, out of sheer submission, because she had made a dead set at him, and would not apparently be said "nay" to. It is a difficult thing to manœuvre a determined woman in the country, where your habits are known, and they can assail you at all points—church, streets, fields, roads, lanes, all are open to them; or they can even get into your house under plea of a charity subscription, if needs be. Mrs. and Miss Dotherington, of Goney Garth,

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were invited to do the Morning Post department, and because there was no fear of Miss Dotherington, who was "very amiable," interfering with our Billy. Mrs. Dotherington's other *forte*, besides propagating parties, consisted in angling for legacies, and she was continually on the trot looking after or killing people from whom she had, or fancied she had, expectations. "I've just been to see poor Mrs. Snuff," she would say, drawing a long face; "she's looking *wretchedly* ill, poor thing; fear she's not long for this world;" or, with a grin, "I suppose you've heard old Mr. Wheezington has had another attack in the night, which nearly carried him off." Nothing pleased her so much as being told that any one from whom she had expectations was on the wane. She could ill conceal her satisfaction.

So far so good; the party now numbered twelve, six of themselves and six strangers, and nobody to interfere with Fine Billy. The question then arose, whether to ask the Blurkinses, or the Faireys, or the Crickletons, and this caused an anxious deliberation. Blurkins was a landowner, over whose property the Major frequently hunted; but then on the other hand, he was a most disagreeable person, who would be sure to tread upon everybody's corns before the evening was over. Indeed, the Blurkins family, like noxious vermin, would seem to have been sent into the world for some inscrutable purpose, their mission apparently being to take the conceit out of people by telling them home truths. "Lor' bless us! how old you have got! why, you've lost a front tooth! declare I shouldn't have known you," or "Your nose and your chin have got into fearful proximity," was the sort of salute Blurkins would give an acquaintance after an absence. Or if the "Featherbedfordshire Gazette," or the "Hit-im and Hold-imshire Herald" had an unflattering paragraph respecting a party's interference at the recent elections, or on any other subject, Blurkins was the man who would bring it under his notice. "There, sir, there; see what they say about you!" he would say, coming up in the news-room, with the paper neatly folded to the paragraph, and presenting it to him.

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The Faireys of Yarrow Court were the most producible people, but then Miss was a beauty, who had even presumed to vie with the Yammertons, and they could not ask the old people without her. Besides which, it had transpired that a large deal box, carefully covered with glazed canvas, had recently arrived at the Rosedale station, which it was strongly suspected contained a new dinner dress from Madame Glacé's, in Hanover Street; and it would never do to let her sport it at Yammerton Grange against their girls' rather soiled—but still by candle-light extremely passable—watered silk ones. So, after due deliberation, the Faireys were rejected.

The Crickletons' claims were then taken into consideration.

Crick was the son of Crickleton, the late eminent chiropodist of Bolton Row, whom many of our readers will remember parading about London on his piebald pony, with a groom in a yellow coat, red plush breeches, and boots; and the present Crickleton was now what he called "seeking repose" in the country, which, in his opinion, consisted in setting all his neighbours by the ears. He rented Lavender Lodge and farm, and being a thorough cockney, with a great inclination for exposing his ignorance both in the sporting and farming way, our knowing Major was making rather a good thing of him. At first there was a little rivalry between them, as to which was the greater man: Crickleton affirming that his father might have been knighted; the Major replying, that as long as he wasn't knighted it made no matter. The Major, however, finding it his interest to humour his consequence, compromised matters, by always taking in Mrs. Crickleton, a compliment that Crick returned by taking in Mrs. Yammerton. Though the Major used, when on the running-down tack, to laugh at the idea of a knight's son claiming precedence, yet, when on the running-up one, he used to intimate that his friend's father might have been knighted, and even sometimes assigned the honour to his friend himself. So he talked of him to our Billy.

The usual preponderating influence setting in in favour of acceptances, our host and hostess were obliged to play their

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remaining card with caution. There were two sets of people with equal claims—the Impelows of Buckup Hill, and the Baskyfields of Lingworth Lawn; the Impelows, if anything, having the prior claim, inasmuch as the Yammertons had dined with them last; but then, on the other hand, there was a very forward young Impelow whom they couldn't accommodate, that is to say, didn't want to have; while, as regarded the Baskyfields, old Basky and Crickleton were at daggers drawn about a sow Basky had sold him, and they would very likely get to loggerheads about it during the evening. A plan of the table was drawn up, to see if it was possible to separate them sufficiently, supposing people would only have the sense to go to their right places, but it was found to be impracticable to do justice to their consequence, and preserve the peace as well; so the idea of having the Baskyfields was obliged to be relinquished. This delay was fatal to the Impelows, for John Giles, their man-of-all-work, having seen Solomon scouring the country on horseback with a basket, in search of superfluous poultry, had reported the forthcoming grand spread at the Grange to his "Missis;" and after waiting patiently for an invitation, it at length came so late as to be an evident convenience, which they wouldn't submit to; so after taking a liberal allowance of time to answer, in order to prevent the Yammertons from playing the same base trick upon any one else, they declined in a stiff, non-reason-assigning note. This was the first check to the hitherto prosperous current of events, and showed our sagacious friends that the time was past for stopping gaps with family people, and threw them on the other resources of the district.

The usual bachelor stop-gaps of the neighbourhood were Tom Hetherington, of Bearbinder Park, and Jimmy Jarperson, of Fothergill Burn, both of whom had their disqualifications; Jarperson's being an acute nerve-shaking sort of laugh, that set every one's teeth on edge who heard it, and earned for him the title of the Laughing Hyæna; the other's misfortune being, that he was only what may be called an intermediate gentleman, that is to say, he could act the gentleman up to

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a pint of wine or so, after which quantity nature gradually asserted her supremacy, and he became himself again.

Our friend, Paul Straddler, of Hinton, at one time had had the call of them both, but the Major, considering that Straddler had not used due diligence in the matter of Golden-drop, was not inclined to have him. Besides which, Straddler required a bed, which the Major was not disposed to yield, a bed involving a breakfast, and perhaps a stall for his horse, to say nothing of an out-of-place groom Straddler occasionally adopted, and who could eat as much as any two men. So the Laughing Hyæna and Hetherington were selected.

And now, gentle reader, if you will have the kindness to tell them off on your fingers as we call them over, we will see if we have got a full party, eighteen, as we said, being the orthodox size in the country, and as many as ever the Major can cram into his dining-room. Please count:—

Major, Mrs., three Misses Yammerton and Fine Billy	. six.
The Rev Mr and Mrs. Tightlace	eight.
Mr and Mrs Rocket Larkspur	ten.
Mrs and Miss Dotherington	twelve.
Mr. and Mrs. Blurkins	fourteen.
Mr and Mrs. Crickleton	sixteen.
The Hyæna, and Hetherington	eighteen.

All right ! eighteen ; fourteen for dining-room chairs, and four for bedroom ones. There are but twelve champagne needle-cases, but the deficiency is supplied by half-a-dozen ale glasses at the low end of the table, which the Major says will “ never be seen.”

So now, if you please, we will go and dress—dinner being sharp six, recollect.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GATHERING.



F a dinner-party in town, with all the aids and appliances of sham butlers, job-cooks, area-sneak-entrées, and extraneous confectionery, causes confusion in an establishment, how much more so must a party in the country, where, in addition to the guests, their servants, their horses, and their carriages are to be accommodated. What a turning-out, and putting-up, and make-shifting, is there! What a grumbling and growling at not getting into the best stable, or at not having the state-vehicle put into the coach-house. If Solomon had not combined the wisdom of his namesake with the patience of Job, he would have succumbed to the pressure from without. As it was, he kept persevering on, until having got the last shandry-dan deposited under the hay-house, he had just time to slip upstairs to "clean himself," and be ready to wait at dinner.

But what a commotion the party makes in the kitchen! Everybody is in a state of stew, from the gallant Betty Bone down to the hind's little girl from Bonnyriggs Farm, whom they have "got in" for the occasion.

Nor do their anxieties end with the dishing-up of the dinner; for no sooner is it despatched, than that scarcely less onerous entertainment, the supper for the servants, has to be provided. Then comes the coffee, then the tea, then the tray, and then the carriages wanted, then good night, good night, good night; most agreeable evening; no idea it was so late; and getting away. But the heat, and steam, and vapour of the

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kitchen overpowers us, and we gladly seek refuge in the newly "done-up" drawing-room.

In it behold the Major!—the Major in all the glory of the Yammerton harrier uniform, a myrtle-green coat, with a gold-embroidered hare on the myrtle-green velvet collar, and puss with her ears well back, striding away over a dead gold surface, with a raised burnished rim of a button, a nicely-washed, stiffly-starched white vest, with a yellow silk one underneath, black shorts, black silk stockings, and patent leather pumps. He has told off his very rare and singularly fine port wine, his prime old Madeira, matured in the West Indies; his nutty sherry, and excellently flavoured claret, all recently bought at the auction mart, not forgetting the ginger-pop-like champagne—allowing the liberal measure of a pint for each person of the latter, and he is now trying to cool himself down into the easy-minded, unconcerned, every-day-dinner-giving host.

Mrs. Yammerton, too, on whom devolves the care of the wax and the moderateurs, is here superintending her department—seeing that the hearth is properly swept, and distributing the Punches, and Posts, and "Ask Mamma's" judiciously over the fine variegated table-cover. She is dressed in a rich silvery grey—with a sort of thing like a silver cow tie, with full tassels, twisted and twined serpent-like into her full, slightly streaked, dark hair.

The illumination being complete, she seats herself fan in hand on the sofa, and a solemn pause then ensues, broken only by Billy's and Monsieur's meanderings overhead, and the keen whistle of the November wind careering among the hollies and evergreens, which the Major keeps interpreting into wheels.

Then his wife and he seek to relieve the suspense of the moment by speculating on who will come first.

"Those nasty Tightlaces for a guinea," observed the Major, polishing his nails, while Mrs. Yammerton predicted the Larkspurs.

"No, the Tights," reiterated the Major, jingling his silver; "Tightlaces always comes first—thinks to catch one unprepared——"

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ASK MAMMA.

At length the furious bark of the inhospitable terrier, who really seemed as if he would eat horses, vehicle, visitors, and all, was followed by a quick grind up to the door, and such a pull at the bell as made the Major fear would cause it to suspend payment for good—*ring-ring-ring-ring-ring* it went, as if it was never going to stop.

“Pulled the bell out of the socket, for a guinea,” exclaimed the Major, listening for the letting down of steps, iron or recessed—recessed had it.

“Mrs. D.” said the Major—figuring her old Landaulet in his mind.

“*Ladies* evidently,” assented Mrs. Yammerton, as the rustle of silks on their way to the put-to-rights Sanctum, sounded past the drawing-room door. The Major then begun speculating as to whether they would get announced before another arrival took place, or not.

* * * * *

Presently a renewed rustle was succeeded by the now yellow-legged brown-backed Bumbler, throwing open the door and exclaiming in a stentorian voice, as if he thought his master and mistress had turned suddenly deaf, “MRS. and MISS DOTHERINGTON!” and in an instant the four were hugging, and grinning, and pump-handling each other’s arms as if they were going into ecstasies, Mrs. Dotherington interlarding her gymnastics with Mrs. Yammerton with sly squeezes of the hand, suited to *sotto voce* observations not intended for the Major’s ears, of “so ‘appy to ‘ear it! so *glad* to congratulate you! So *nice*!” with an inquisitive whisper of—“*Which is it? which is it?* Do tell me!”

* * * * *

Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow-wow went the clamorous Fury again; *Ring-ring-ring-ring-ring-ring-ring* went the aggravated bell, half drowning Mrs. Yammerton’s impressive “Oh dear! nothin’ of the sort—nothin’ of the sort, only a fox-hunting acquaintance of the Major’s—only a fox-hunting acquaintance of the Major’s.” And then the Major came to renew his affectionate



"MRS. AND MISS DOTHERINGTON!"

ASK MAMMA.

embraces, with inquiries about the night, and the looks of the moon—was it hazy, or was it clear, or how was it?

“MR. and MRS. ROCKET LARKSPUR!” exclaimed the Bumbler, following up the key-note in which he had pitched his first announcement, and forthwith the hugging and grinning was resumed with the new comers, Mrs. Larkspur presently leading Mrs. Yammerton off sofawards, in order to poke her inquiries unheard by the Major, who was now opening a turnip dialogue with Mr. Rocket—yellow bullocks, purple tops, and so on. “Well, tell me—*which is it?*” ejaculated Mrs. Rocket Larkspur, looking earnestly in Mrs. Yammerton’s expressive eyes—“*which is it?*” repeated she, in a determined sort of take-no-denial tone.

“Oh dear! nothin’ of the sort—nothin’ of the sort, I assure you!” whispered Mrs. Yammerton anxiously, well knowing the danger of holloaing before you are out of the wood.

“Oh, *tell me—tell me,*” whispered Mrs. Rocket, coaxingly; “I’m not like Mrs. —um there,” looking at Mrs. Dotherington, “who would blab it all over the country.”

“*Really* I have nothing to tell,” replied Mrs. Yammerton serenely.

“Why, do you mean to say he’s not after one of the —um’s?” demanded Mrs. Rocket eagerly.

“I don’t know what you mean,” laughed Mrs. Yammerton.

Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow went the terrier again, giving Mrs. Yammerton an excuse for sidling off to Mrs. “um,” who with her daughter were lost in admiration at a floss-silk cockatoo, perched on an orange tree, the production of Miss Flora. “Oh, it was so beautiful! Oh, what a love of a screen it would make; what would she give if her Margaret could do such work,” inwardly thinking how much better Margaret was employed making her own—we will not say what.

Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow went Fury again, the proceeds of this bark being Mr. and Mrs. Tightlace, who now entered, the former “’oping they weren’t late,” as he smirked, and smiled, and looked round for the youth on whom he had to vent his “British Sportsman” knowledge—the latter speedily drawing

ASK MAMMA.

Mrs. Yammerton aside—to the ladies know what. But it was “no go” again. Mrs. Yammerton really didn’t know what Mrs. Tightlace meant. No; she *really* didn’t. Nor did Mrs. Tightlace’s assurance that it was “the talk of the country,” afford any clue to her meaning—but Mrs. Tightlace’s large miniature brooch being luckily loose, Mrs. Yammerton essayed to fasten it, which afforded her an opportunity of bursting into transports of delight at its beauty, mingled with exclamations as to its “*wonderful* likeness to Mr. T.,” though in reality she was looking at Mrs. Tightlace’s berthe, to see whether it was machinery lace, or real.

Then the grand rush took place; and Fury’s throat seemed wholly inadequate to the occasion, as first Blurkins’s brougham, then Jarperson’s gig, next the corn-cutter’s *calèche*, and lastly, Hetherington’s dogcart whisked up to the door, causing a meeting of the highly decorated watered silks of the house, and the hooded enveloped visitors hurrying through the passage to the cloak room.

By the time the young ladies had made their obeisances and got congratulated on their looks, the now metamorphosed visitors came trooping in, flourishing their laced kerchiefs, and flattening their *chapeaux mécaniques* as they entered. Then the full chorus of conversation was established; moon, hounds, turnips, horses, Parliament, with the usual—“Oi see by the papers that Her Majesty is gone to Osborne,” or, “Oi see by the papers that the Comet is coming;” while Mrs. Rocket Larkspur draws Miss Yammerton aside to try what she can fish out of her. But here comes Fine Billy, and if ever hero realised an author’s description of him, assuredly it is our friend, for he sidles as unconcernedly into the room as he would into a Club or Casino, with all the dreamy listlessness of a thorough exquisite, apparently unconscious of any change having taken place in the party. But if Billy is unconscious of the presence of strangers, his host is not, and forthwith he inducts him into their acquaintance—Hetherington’s, Hyæna’s, and all.

It is, doubtless, very flattering of great people to vote all

ASK MAMMA.

the little ones “one of us,” and not introduce them to anybody, but we take leave to say, that society is considerably improved by a judicious presentation. We talk of our advanced civilisation, but manners are not nearly so good, or so “at-ease-setting,” as they were with the last generation of apparently stiffer, but in reality easier, more affable gentlemen of the old school. But what a note of admiration our Billy is! How gloriously he is attired. His naturally curling hair, how gracefully it flows; his elliptic collar, how faultlessly it stands; his cravat, how correct; his shirt, how wonderfully fine; and oh! how happy he must be with such splendid sparkling diamond studs—such beautiful amethyst buttons at his wrists—and such a love of a chain disporting itself over his richly embroidered blood-stoned-buttoned vest. Altogether, such a first-class swell is rarely seen beyond the bills of mortality. He looks as if he ought to be kept under a glass shade. But here comes the Bumbler, and now for the agony of the entertainment.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GRAND SPREAD ITSELF



HE Major, who for the last few minutes has been fidgeting about pairing parties off according to a written programme he has in his waistcoat pocket, has just time to assign Billy to Mrs. Rocket Larkspur, to assuage her anguish at not being taken in before Mrs.

Crickleton, when the Bumbler's half-fledged voice is heard proclaiming at its utmost altitude—"DINNER IS SARVED!" Then there is such a bobbing and bowing, and backing of chairs, and such inward congratulations, that the "'orrid 'alf 'our" is over, and hopes from some that they may not get next the fire—while others wish to be there. Though the Major could not, perhaps, manage to get twenty thousand men out of Hyde Park, he can, nevertheless, manœuvre a party out of his drawing-room into his dining-room, and forthwith he led the way, with Mrs. Crickleton under his arm, trusting to the reel winding off right at the end. And right it would most likely have wound off had not the leg-protruding Bumbler's tongue-buckle caught the balloon-like amplitude of Mrs. Rocket Larkspur's dress and caused a slight stoppage—in the passage—during which time two couples slipped past and so deranged the entire order of the table. However, there was no great harm done, as far as Mrs. Larkspur's consequence was concerned, for she got next Mr. Tightlace, with Mr. Pringle between her and Miss Yammerton, whom Mrs. Larkspur had just got to admit, that she wouldn't mind being Mrs. P——, and Miss having been thus

ASK MAMMA.

confidential, Mrs. was inclined, partly out of gratitude—partly, perhaps, because she couldn't help it—to befriend her. She was a great mouser, and would promote the most forlorn hope, sooner than not be doing.

We are now in the dining-room, and very smart everything is. In the centre of the table, of course, stands the Yammerton testimonial—a “Savory” chased silver-plated candelabrum, with six branches, all lighted up, and an ornamental centre flower-basket, decorated with evergreens and winter roses, presented to our friend on his completing his “five-and-twentieth year as master of harriers,” and in gratitude for the unparalleled sport he had uniformly shown the subscribers.

Testimonialising has become quite a mania since the Major got his, and no one can say whose turn it may be next. It is not everybody who, like Mr. Daniel Whittle Harvey with the police force one, can nip them in the bud; but Inspector Field, we think, might usefully combine testimonial-detecting with his other secret services. He would have plenty to do—especially in the provinces. Indeed London does not seem to be exempt from the mania, if we may judge by Davis, the Queen's huntsman's recent attempt to avert the intended honour; neatly informing the projectors that “their continuing to meet him in the hunting-field would be the best proof of their approbation of his conduct.” However, the Major got his testimonial; and there it stands, flanked by two pretty imitation Dresden vases decorated with flowers and evergreens also. And now the company being at length seated and grace said, the reeking covers are removed from the hare and mock-turtle tureens, and the confusion of tongues gradually subsides into sip-sip-sipping of soup. And now Jarperson, having told his newly-caught footman-groom to get him hare-soup instead of mock-turtle, the lad takes the plate of the latter up to the tureen of the former, and his master gets a mixture of both—which he thinks very good.

And now the nutty sherry comes round, which the Major introduces with a stuttering exordium that would induce any one who didn't know him to suppose it cost at least

ASK MAMMA.

Sos. a dozen, instead of 36s. (bottles included); and this being sipped and smacked and pronounced excellent, "two fishes" replace the two soups, and the banquet proceeds, Mr. Tightlace trying to poke his sporting knowledge at Billy between heats, but without success, the commoner not rising at the bait, indeed rather shirking it.

A long-necked green bottle of what the Bumbler called "bluecellas," then goes its rounds; and the first qualms of hunger being appeased, the gentlemen are more inclined to talk and listen to the luncheon-dining ladies. Mrs. Rocket Larkspur has been waiting most anxiously for Billy's last mouthful, in order to interrogate him, as well as to London fashion, as to his opinions of the Miss "ums." Of course with Miss "um" sitting just below Billy, the latter must be done through the medium of the former—so she leads off upon London.

"She supposed he'd been very gay in London?"

"Yarse," drawled Billy in the true dandified style, drawing his napkin across his lips as he spoke.

Mrs. Rocket wasn't so young as she had been, and Billy was too young to take up with what he profanely called "old ladies."

"He'd live at the west-end, she s'posed?"

"Yarse," replied Billy, feeling his amplified tie.

"Did he know Billiter Square?"

"Yarse," replied he, running his ringed fingers down his studs.

"Was it fashionable?" asked Mrs. Rocket. (She had a cousin lived there who had asked her to go and see her.)

"Y-a-a-rse, I should say it is," drawled Billy, now playing with a bunch of trinkets, a gold miniature pistol, a pearl and diamond studded locket, a gold pencil-case, and a white cornelian heart, suspended to his watch-chain. "Y-a-a-rse, I should say it is," repeated he; adding, "not so fashionable as Belgrave."

"Sceuse me, sare," interrupted Monsieur Jean Rougier from behind his master's chair, "Sceuse me, it is not fashionable,

ASK MAMMA.

sare—it is not near de Palace or de Park of Hyde, sare, bot down away among those dem base mechanics in de east—beyond de Mansion 'Ouse, in fact."

"Oh, ah, y-a-a-rse, true," replied Billy, not knowing where it was, but presuming from Mrs. Larkspur's inquiry that it was some newly sprung-up square on one of the western horns of the metropolis.

Taking advantage of the interruption, Mr. Tightlace again essayed to edge in his "British Sportsman" knowledge, beginning with an inquiry if "the Earl of Ladythorne had a good set of dogs this season?" but the Bumbler soon cut short the thread of his discourse by presenting a bottle of brisk gooseberry at his ear. The fizzing stuff then went quickly round, taxing the ingenuity of the drinkers to manœuvre the frothy fluid out of their needlecase-shaped glasses. Then as conversation was beginning to be restored, the door suddenly flew open to a general rush of returning servants. There was Solomon carrying a sirloin of beef, followed by Mr. Crickleton's gaudy red-and-yellow young man with a boiled turkey, who in turn was succeeded by Mr. Robert Larkspur's hobbledehoy with a ham, and Mr. Tightlace's with a stew. Pâtés and cotelettes, and minces, and messes follow in quick succession; and these having taken their seats, immediately vacate them for the Chiltern-hundreds of the hand. A shoal of vegetables and sundries alight on the side table; and the feast seems fairly under weigh.

But see! somehow it prospers not!

People stop short at the second or third mouthful, and lay down their knives and forks as if they had had quite enough. Patties, and cutlets, and sausages, and side-dishes, all share the same fate!

"Take round the champagne," says the Major, with an air, thinking to retrieve the character of his kitchen with the solids. The juicy roast beef, and delicate white turkey with inviting green stuffing, and rich red ham, and turnip-and-carrot-adorned stewed beef then make their progresses, but the same fate attends them also. People stop at the second or third

ASK MAMMA.

mouthful; some send their plates away slily, and ask for a little of a different dish to what they have been eating, or rather tasting. That, however, shares the same fate.

"Take round the champagne," again says the Major, trying what another cheerer would do. Then he invites the turkey-eaters—or leavers, rather—to eat beef; and the beef-eaters—or leavers—to eat turkey: but they all decline with a thoroughly satisfied "no-more-for-me" sort of shake of the head.

"Take away!" at length says the Major, with an air of disgust, following the order with an invitation to Mrs. Rocket Larkspur to take wine. The guests follow the host's example, and a momentary rally of liveliness ensues. Mrs. Rocket Larkspur and Mr. Tightlace contend for Fine Billy's ear; but Miss Yammerton interposing with a sly whisper supersedes them both. Mrs. Rocket construes that accordingly. A general chirp of conversation is presently established, interspersed with heavy demands upon the bread-basket by the gentlemen. Presently the door is thrown open, and a grand procession of sweets enters—jellies, blancmanges, open tarts, shut tarts, meringues, plum pudding, maccaroni, black puddings—we know not what besides: and the funds of conviviality again look up. The rally is, however, but of momentary duration. The same evil genius that awaited on the second course seems to attend on the third. People stop at the second or third mouthful and send away the undiminished plates slily, as before. Some venture on other dishes—but the result is the same—the plate vanishes with its contents. There is, however, a great run upon the cheese—Cheshire and Gloucester: and the dessert suffers severely. All the make-weight dishes, even, disappear; and when the gentlemen rejoin the ladies in the drawing-room they attack the tea as if they had not had any dinner.

At length a "most agreeable evening" is got through; and as each group whisks away, there is a general exclamation of "What a most extraordinary taste everything had of ——" What do you think, gentle reader?

"Can't guess! can't you?"

ASK MAMMA.

"What do *you* think, Mrs. Brown?"

"What do *you* think, Mrs. Jones?"

"What do *you*, Mrs. Robinson?"

"What! none of you able to guess! And yet everybody at table hit off directly!"

"All give it up?" Brown, Jones, and Robinson?

"Yes—yes—yes."

"Well then, we'll tell you":—

"Everything tasted of castor oil!"

"*Castor oil!*" exclaims Mrs. Brown.

"*Castor oil!*" shrieks Mrs. Jones.

"*Castor oil!*" shudders Mrs. Robinson.

"*O-o-o—o!* how nasty!"

"But how came it there?" asks Mrs. Brown.

"We'll tell you that, too":—

The Major's famous cow, Strawberry-cream's calf, was ill, and they had tapped a pint of fine "cold-drawn" for it, which Monsieur Jean Rougier happening to upset, just mopped it up with his napkin, and chucking it away, it was speedily adopted by the hind's little girl in charge of the plates and dishes, who imparted a most liberal castor oil flavour to everything she touched.

And that entertainment is now known by the name of the "Castor Oil Dinner."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A HUNTING MORNING.



WHAT a commotion there was in the house the next morning! As great a disturbance as if the Major had been going to hunt an African lion, a royal Bengal tiger, or a bison itself. *Ring-ring-ring-ring* went one bell, *tinkle-tinkle-tinkle* went another, *ring-ring-ring* went the first again, followed by exclamations of "There's master's bell again!" with such a running downstairs, and such a getting up again. Master wanted this, master wanted that, master had carried away the buttons at his knees, master wanted his other pair of white what-do-they-call-'ems—not cords, but moleskins—that treacherous material being much in vogue among masters of harriers. Then master's boots wouldn't do, he wanted his last pair, not the newly-footed ones, and they were on the trees, and the Bumbler was busy in the stable, and Betty Bone could not skin the trees, and altogether there was a terrible hubbub in the house. His overnight exertions, though coupled with the castor-oil catastrophe, seemed to have abated none of his ardour in pursuit of the hare.

Meanwhile our little dandy, Billy, lay tumbling and tossing in bed, listening to the dread preparations, wishing he could devise an excuse for declining to join him. The recollection of his bumps, and his jumps, and his falls, arose vividly before him, and he would fain have said "no" to any more. He felt certain that the Major was going to give him a startler, more dreadful, perhaps, than those he had had with his lordship. Would that he was well out of it! What pleasure

ASK MAMMA.

could there be in galloping after an animal they could shoot? In the midst of these reflections Mons. Rougier entered the apartment and threw further light on the matter by opening the shutters.

"You sall get up, sare, and pursue de vild beast of de voods —de Major is a-goin' to hont."

"Y-a-r-se," replied Billy, turning over.

"I sall get out your habit verd, your green coat, dat is to say."

"No, no!" roared Billy; "*the red! the red!*"

"*De red!*" exclaimed Monsieur in astonishment, "de red! Not for de soup dogs! you only hont bold Reynard in de red."

"Oh, yes, you do," retorted Billy, "didn't the Major come to the carstle in red?"

"Because he came to hont de fox," replied Monsieur; "if he had com' for to hunt poor puss he would 'ave 'ad on his green or his grey, or his some other colour."

Billy now saw the difference, and his mortification increased.

"Well, I'll breakfast in red at all events," said he, determined to have that pleasure.

"Vell, sare, you can pleasure yourself in dat matter; but it sall be moch ridicule if you pursue de puss in it."

"But why not?" asked Billy; "hunting's hunting, all the world over."

"I cannot tell you vy, sir; but it is not *etiquette*, and I as a professor of garniture, toggerie vot you call, sud lose *caste* with my comrades if I lived with a me lor vot honted poor puss in de pink."

"*Humph!*" grunted Billy, bouncing out of bed, thinking what a bore it was paying a man for being his master. He then commenced the operations of the occasion, and with the aid of Monsieur was presently attired in the dread costume. He then clonk, clonk, clonked downstairs with his Jersey-patterned spurs, toes well out to clear the steps, most heartily wishing he was clonking up again on his return from the hunt.

Monsieur was right. The Major is in his myrtle-green coat



BILLY PRINGLE COMING DOWN.

ASK MAMMA.

—a coat, not built after the fashion of the scanty swallow-tailed red in which he appears at page 93 of this agreeable work, but with the more liberal allowance of cloth peculiar to the period in which we live. A loosely hanging garment, and not a strait-waistcoat, in fact, a fashion very much in favour of bunglers, seeing that anybody can make a sack, while it takes a tailor to make a coat. The Major's cost him about two pounds five, the cloth having been purchased at a clothier's and made up at home, by a three shilling a day man and his meat. We laugh at the ladies for liking to be cheated by their milliners; but young gentlemen are quite as accommodating to their tailors. Let any man of forty look at his tailor's bill when he was twenty, and see what a liberality of innocence it displays. And that not only in matters of taste and fashion, which are the legitimate loopholes of extortion, but in the sober articles of ordinary requirement. We saw a once-celebrated west-end tailor's bill the other day, in which a plain black coat was made to figure in the following magniloquent item:—

“A superfine black cloth coat, lappels sewed on” (we wonder if they are usually pinned or glued) “lappels sewed on, cloth collar, cotton sleeve linings, velvet handfacings” (most likely cotton too), “embossed edges and fine wove buttons”—how much does the reader think? four guineas? four pounds ten? five guineas? No, five pounds eighteen and sixpence! An article that our own excellent tailor supplies for three pounds fifteen! In a tailor's case that was recently tried, a party swore that fourteen guineas was a fair price for a Taglioni, when everybody knows that they are to be had for less than four. But boys will be boys to the end of the chapter, so let us return to our sporting Major. He is not so happy in his nether garments as he is in his upper ones; indeed he has on the same boots and moleskins that Leech drew him in at Tantivy Castle, for these lower habiliments are not so easy of accomplishment in the country as coats, and though most people have tried them there, few wear them out, they are always so ugly and unbecoming. As, however, our Major doesn't often compare

ASK MAMMA.

his with town-made ones, he struts about in the comfortable belief that they are all right—very smart.

He is now in a terrible stew, and has been backwards and forwards between the house and the stable, and in and out of the kennel, and has called Solomon repeatedly from his work to give him further instructions and further instructions still, until the Major has about confused himself and everybody about him. As soon as ever he heard by his tramp overhead that Billy had got into his boots, he went to the bottom of the stairs and holloaed along the passage towards the kitchen, "Betty! Betty! Betty! send in breakfast as soon as ever Mr. Pringle comes down!"

"Ah, dere is de Major," observed Monsieur, pausing from Billy's hair-arranging to listen—"him kick up de deval's own dost on a huntin' mornin'."

"What's happened him?" asked Billy.

"Don't know—but von would think he was going to storm a city—take Sebastopol himself," replied Monsieur, shrugging his broad shoulders. He then resumed his valeting operations, and crowned the whole by putting Billy into his green cut-away, without giving him even a peep of the pink.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Yammerton has been holding a court of inquiry in the kitchen and larder, as to the extent of the overnight mischief, smelling at this dish and that, criticising the spoons, and subjecting each castor-oily offender to severe ablution in boiling water. Of course no one could tell in whose hands the bottle of "cold drawn" had come "in two," and Monsieur was too good a judge to know anything about it; so as the mischief couldn't be repaired, it was no use bewailing it farther than to make a knot in her mind to be more careful of such dangerous commodities in future.

Betty Bone had everything—tea, coffee, bread, cakes, eggs, ham (fried so as to hide the spurious flavour), honey, jam, &c., ready for Miss Benson, who had been impressed into the carrying service, *vice* the Bumbler turned whip, to take in as soon as Mr. Pringle descended, a fact that was announced to the household by the Major's uproarious greeting of him in the

ASK MAMMA.

passage. He was overjoyed to see him! He hoped he was none the worse for his overnight festivities; and without waiting for an answer to that, he was delighted to say that it was a fine hunting morning, and as far as human judgment could form an opinion, a good scenting one; but after five-and-thirty years' experience as a master of "haryers," he could conscientiously say that there was nothing so doubtful or ticklish as scent, and he made no doubt Mr. Pringle's experience would confirm his own, that many days when they might expect it to be first-rate, it was bad, and many days when they might expect it to be bad, it was first-rate; to all which accumulated infliction Billy replied with his usual imperturbable "Yarse," and passed on to the more agreeable occupation of greeting the young ladies in the dining-room. Very glad they all were to see him as he shook hands with all three.

The Major, however, was not to be put off that way; and as he could not get Billy to talk about hunting, he drew his attention to breakfast, observing that they had a goodish trot before them, and that punctuality was the politeness of princes. Saying which, he sat down, laying his great gold watch open on a plate beside him, so that its noisy ticking might remind Billy of what they had to do. The Major couldn't make it out how it was that the souls of the young men of the present day are so difficult to inflame about hunting. Here was he, turned of—, and as eager in the pursuit as ever. "Must be that they smoke all their energies out," thought he; and then applied himself vigorously to his tea and toast, looking up every now and then with irate looks at his wife and daughters, whose volubility greatly retarded Billy's breakfast proceedings. He, nevertheless, made sundry efforts to edge in a hunting conversation himself, observing that Mr. Pringle mustn't expect such an establishment as the Peer's, or perhaps many that he was accustomed to—that they would have rather a shortish pack out, which would enable them to take the field again at an early day, and so on; all of which Billy received with the most provoking indifference, making the Major wish he mightn't be

ASK MAMMA.

a regular crasher, who cared for nothing but riding. At length, tea, toast, eggs, ham, jam, all had been successively taxed, the Major closed and pocketed his noisy watch, and the doomed youth rose to perform the dread penance with the pack. "Good byes," "good mornings," "hope you'll have good sport," followed his bowing, spur-clanking exit from the room.

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNKENNELING.



LOUD crack of the Major's hammer-headed whip now announced their arrival in the stable-yard, which was at once a signal for the hounds to raise a merry cry, and for the stable-men to loosen their horses' heads from the pillar-reins. It also brought a bevy of caps and curl-papers to the back windows of the house to see the young Earl, for so Rougier had assured them his master was—(heir to the Earldom of Ladythorne)—mount. At a second crack of the whip the stable-door flew open, and as a shirt-sleeved lad receded, the grey-headed, green-coated sage Solomon advanced, leading forth the sleek, well-tended, well-coddled Napoleon the Great.

Amid the various offices filled by this Mathews-at-home of a servant, there was none perhaps in which he looked better or more natural than in that of a huntsman. Short, spare, neat, with a bright black eye, contrasting with the sobered hue of his thin grey hair, no one would suppose that the calfless little yellow and brown-liveried coachman of the previous night was the trim, neatly-booted, neatly-tied huntsman now raising his cap to the Richest Commoner in England, and his great master Major Yammerton—Major of the Featherbedfordshire Militia, master of "haryers," and expectant magistrate.

"Well, Solomon," said the Major, acknowledging his salute, as though it was their first meeting of the morning, "well, Solomon, what do you think of the day?"

ASK MAMMA.

"Well, sir, I think the day's well enough," replied Solomon, who was no waster of words.

"I think so too," said the Major, drawing on his clean doeskin gloves. The pent-up hounds then raised another cry.

"That's pretty!" exclaimed the Major, listening.

"That's *beautiful*!" added he, like an enthusiastic admirer of music at the opera.

Imperturbable Billy spoke not.

"P'r'aps you'd like to see them unkennelled?" said the Major, thinking to begin with the first act of the drama.

"Yarse," replied Billy, feeling safe as long as he was on foot.

The Major then led the way through a hen-house-looking door into a little green court-yard, separated by peeled larch palings from a flagged one beyond, in which the expectant pack were now jumping and frisking and capering in every species of wild delight.

"Ah, you beauties!" exclaimed the Major, again cracking his whip. He then paused, thinking there would surely be a little praise. But no; Billy just looked at them as he would at a pen full of stock at a cattle show.

"Be-be-beauties, ar'n't they?" stuttered the Major.

"Yarse," replied Billy, thinking they were prettier than the great lounging, slouching foxhounds.

"Ca-ca-capital hounds," observed the Major.

No response from Billy.

"Undeniable b-b-blood," continued our friend.

No response again.

"Foxhounds in mi-mi-miniature," observed the Major.

"Yarse," replied Billy, who understood that.

"Lovely! Lovely! Lovely! There's a beautiful bitch," continued the Major, pointing to a richly pied one that began frolicking to his call.

"Bracelet! Bracelet! Bracelet!" holloed he to another; "pretty bitch that—pure Sir Dashwood King's blood, just the right size for a haryer—shouldn't be too large. I hold with So-so-somerville," continued the Major, waxing warm,

ASK MAMMA.

either with his subject, or at Billy's indifference, "that one should—

'A di-di-different hound for every chase
Select with judgment; nor the timorous hare,
O'ermatch'd, destroy; but leave that vile offence
To the mean, murderous, coursing crew, intent
On blood and spoil: "'

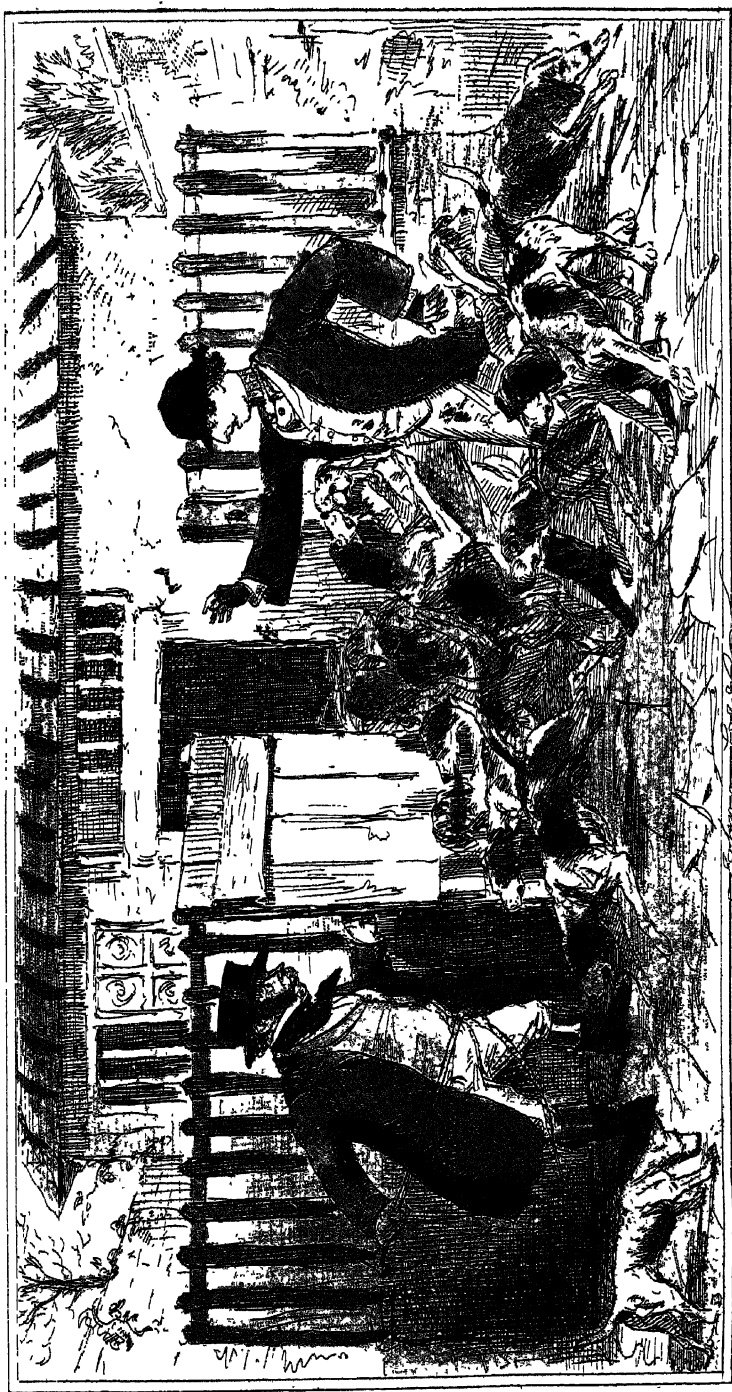
"Yarse," replied Billy, turning on his heel as though he had had enough of the show.

At this juncturè, the Major drew the bolt, open flew the door, and out poured the pack; Ruffler and Bustler dashing at Billy, and streaking his nice cream-coloured leathers down with their dirty paws, while Thunder and Victim nearly carried him off his legs with the couples. Billy was in a great fright, never having been in such a predicament before.

The Major came to the rescue, and with the aid of his whip and his voice, and his "For shame, Ruffler! for shame, Bustler!" with cuts at the coupled ones, succeeded in restoring order.

"Let's mount," said he, thinking to get Billy out of further danger; so saying he wheeled about and led the way through the outer yard with the glad pack gambolling and frisking around him to the stables.

The hounds raise a fresh cry of joy as they see Solomon with his horse ready to receive them.



Poppy is introduced to the Mayor's Harvers

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHOWING A HORSE.



HE Bumbler, like our Mathews-at-home of a huntsman, is now metamorphosed, and in lieu of a little footman, we have a capped and booted whip. Not that he *is* a whip, for Solomon carries the couples as well as the horn, and also a spare stirrup-leather slung across his shoulder ; but our Major has an eye as well to show as to business, and thinks he may as well do the magnificent, and have a horse ready to change with Billy as soon as Napoleon the Great seems to have had enough. To that end the Bumbler now advances with the Weaver, which he tenders to Billy, with a deferential touch of his cap.

“ Ah, that’s *your* horse ! ” exclaimed the Major, making for White Surrey, to avoid the frolics and favours of his followers ; adding, as he climbed on, “ you’ll find her a ca-ca-capital hack and a first-rate hunter. Here, *elope*, hounds, *elope* ! ” added he, turning his horse’s head away to get the course clear for our friend to mount unmolested.

Billy then effects the ascent of the black mare, most devoutly wishing himself safe off again. The stirrups being adjusted to his length, he gives a home thrust with his feet in the irons, and gathering the thin reins, feels his horse gently with his left leg, just as Solomon mounts Napoleon the Great and advances to relieve the Major of his charge. The cavalcade then proceed ; Solomon, with the now clustering hounds, leading ; the Major and Billy riding side by side, and the Bumbler on Bulldog bringing up the rear. Caps

ASK MAMMA.

and curl-papers then disappear to attend to the avocations of the house, the wearers all agreeing that Mr. Pringle is a pretty young gentleman, and quite worthy of the pick of the young ladies.

Crossing Cowslip garth at an angle they get upon Greenbat pasture, where first fruits of idleness are shown by Twister and Towler breaking away at the cows.

"*Yow, yow !*" they go in the full enjoyment of the chase. It's a grand chance for the Bumbler, who, adjusting his whip-thong, sticks spurs into Bulldog and sets off as hard as ever the old horse can lay legs to the ground.

"Get round them, man ! get round them," shouts the Major, watching Bully's leg-tied endeavours, the old horse being a better hand at walking than galloping.

At length they are stopped and chided and for shamed, and two more fields land our party in Hollington lane, which soon brings them into the Lingyfine and Ewehurst road, whose liberal width and ample siding bespeaks the neighbourhood of a roomier region. Solomon at a look from the Major now takes the grass siding with his hounds, while the gallant master just draws his young friend alongside of them on the road, casting an unconcerned eye upon the scene, in the hope that his guest will say something handsome at last. But no, Billy doesn't. He is fully occupied with his boots and breeches, whose polish and virgin purity he still deplores. There's a desperate daub down one side. The Major tries to engage his attention by coaxing and talking to the hounds. "Cleaver, good dog ! Cleaver ! Chaunter, good dog ! Chaunter !" throwing them bits of biscuit, but all his efforts are vain. Billy plods on at the old post-boy pace, apparently thinking of nothing but himself.

Meanwhile Solomon ambles cockily along on Napoleon, with a backward and forward move of his leg to the horse's action, who ducks and shakes his head and plays good-naturedly with the hounds, as if quite delighted at the idea of what they are going to do. He shows to great advantage. He has not been out for a week, and the coddling and linseeding have given a



'NICE 'OSS THAT,' NOW OBSERVED THE MAJOR.

ASK MAMMA.

healthy bloom to his bay coat, and he has taken a cordial ball with a little catechu, and ten grains of opium, to aid his exertions. Solomon, too, shows him off well. Though he hasn't our friend Dicky Boggledike's airified manner, like him he is little and light, sits neatly in his saddle, while his long coat-lap partly conceals the want of ribbing home of the handsome but washy horse. His boots and breeches, drab cords and brown tops, are good, so are his spurs, also his saddle and bridle.

There is a difference of twenty per cent. between the looks of a horse in a good, well-made London saddle, and in one of those great, spongy, pulby, puddingy things we see in the country. Again, what a contrast there is between a horse looking through a nice plain-fronted, plain-buckled, thin-reined, town-made bridle, and in one of those gaudy-fronted things, all over buckles, with reins thick enough for traces to the Lord Mayor's coach.

All this adornment, however, is wasted upon Fine Billy, who hasn't got beyond the mane and tail beauties of a horse. Action, strength, stamina, symmetry, are as yet sealed subjects to him. The Major was the man who could enlighten him, if Billy would only let him do it, on the two words for himself and one for Billy principle. Do it he would, too, for he saw it was of no use waiting for Billy to begin.

"Nice 'oss that," now observed the Major casually, nodding towards Nap.

"Yarse," replied Billy, looking him over.

"That's the 'o-o-oss I showed you in the stable."

"Is it?" observed Billy, who didn't recognise him.

"Ought to be at M-m-melton, that 'oss," observed the Major.

"Why isn't he?" asked Billy, in the innocence of his heart.

"Don't know," replied the Major carelessly, with a toss of his head; "don't know. The fact is, I'm idle—no one to send with him—too old to go myself—haryers keep me at home—year too short to do all one has to do—see what a length he is—'ord bless us, he'd go over Ashby p-p-pastures like a comet."

ASK MAMMA.

Billy had now got his eyes well fixed upon the horse, which the Major seeing held his peace, for he was a capital seller, and had the great gift of knowing when he had said enough. He was not the man to try and bore a person into buying, or spoil his market by telling a youngster that the horse would go in harness, or by not asking enough. So with Solomon still to-and-froing with his little legs, the horse still lively and gay, the hounds still frisking and playing, the party proceeded through the fertility-diminishing country, until the small fields with live fences gradually gave way to larger, drabber enclosures with stone walls, and Broadstruther hill with its heath-burnt summit and quarry-broken side at length announces their approach to the moors. The moors! Who does not feel his heart expand and his spirit glow as he comes upon the vast ocean-like space of moorland country? Leaving the strife, the cares, the contentions of a narrow, elbow-jostling world for the grand enjoyment of pure unrestricted freedom! The green streak of fertile soil, how sweet it looks, lit up by the fitful gleam of a cloud-obscured sun; the distant sky-touching cairn, how tempting to reach through the many intricacies of mountain ground—so easy to look at, so difficult to travel. The ink rises gaily in our pen at the thought, and pressing on, we cross the rough, picturesque, stone bridge over the translucent stream, so unlike the polished, chiselled structures of town art, where nothing is thought good that is not expensive; and now, shaking off the last enclosure, we reach the sandy road below the watcher's hill-ensconced hut, and so wind round into the panorama of the hills within.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MEET



“H! there we are!” exclaimed the Major, now pointing out the myrtle-green gentlemen with their white cords, moving their steeds to and fro upon the bright sward below the grey rocks of Cushetlaw hill.

“There we are,” repeated he, eyeing them, trying to make out who they were, so as to season his greetings accordingly.

There was Farmer Rintoul on the white, and Godfrey Faulder, the cattle jobber, on the grey; and Caleb Rennison, the horse-breaker, in his twilled-fustian frock, ready to ride over a hound as usual; and old Duffield, the horse-leech, in his low-crowned hat, black tops, and one spur; and Dick Trail, the auctioneer, on his long-tailed nag; and Bonnet, the billiard-table keeper of Hinton, in his odious white hat, grey tweed, and collar-marked screw; but who the cluster of men are on the left the Major can't for the life of him make out. He had hoped that Crickleton might have graced the meet with his presence, but there is no symptom of the yellow-coated groom, and Paul Straddler would most likely be too offended at not being invited to dine and have gone to Sir Moses' hounds at the Cow and Calf on the Fixton and Primrose-bank road. Still there were a dozen or fourteen sportsmen, with two or three more coming over the hill, and distance hiding the deficiencies as well of steeds as of costume, the whole has a very lively and inspiring effect.

At the joyous, well-known “Here they come!” of the lookers

ASK MAMMA.

out, a move is perceptible among the field, who forthwith set off to meet the hounds, and as the advancing parties near, the Major has time to identify and appropriate their faces and their persons. First comes Captain Nabley, the chief constable of Featherbeds, who greets our master with the friendliness of a brother soldier, "one of us" in arms, and is forthwith introduced to our Billy. Next is fat Farmer Nettlefold, who considers himself entitled to a shake of the hand in return for the Major's frequent comings over his farm at Carol-hill green, which compliment being duly paid the great master then raises his hat in return for the salutes of Faulder, Rennison, and Trail, and again stops to shake hands with an aged well-whiskered dandy in mufty, one Mr. Wotherspoon, now farming or starving a little property he purchased with his butlerage savings under the great Duke of Thunderdownshire. Wotherspoon apes the manners of high life with the brandified face of low, talks parliament, and takes snuff from a gold box with a George-the-Fourthian air. He now offers the Major a pinch, who accepts it with graceful concession.

The seedy-looking gentleman in black, on the too palpable three-and-sixpence a sider, is Mr. Catcheside, the County Court bailiff, with his pocket full of summonses, who thinks to throw a round with the Major into the day's hire of his broken-knee'd chestnut, and the greasy-haired, shining-faced youth with him, on the long-tailed white pony, is Ramshaw, the butcher's boy, on the same sort of speculation. Then we have Mr. Meggison's coachman availing himself of his master's absence to give the family horse a turn with the hounds instead of going to coals, as he ought; and Mr. Dotherington's young man halting on his way to the doctor's with a note. He will tell his mistress the doctor was out and he had to wait ever so long till he came home. The four truants seem to herd together on the birds-of-a-feather principle. And now the reinforced party reach the meet below the grey ivy-tangled rocks, and Solomon pulls up at the accustomed spot to give his hounds a roll, and let the Major receive the encomiums of the encircling field. Then there is a repetition of the kennel scene: "Lovely!

ASK MAMMA.

Lovely! Lovely!—beautiful bitch that—Chaunter! Chaunter! Chaunter!—there's a handsome hound—Bustler, good dog!” Only each man has his particular favourite or hound that he has either bred or walked, or knows the name of, and so most of the pack come in for more or less praise. It is agreed on all hands that they never looked better, or the establishment more complete. “Couldn't be better if it had cost five thousand a year!”

Most grateful were their commendations to the Major after the dry, monotonous “yarses” of Billy, who sits looking unconcernedly on, a regular sleeping partner in the old established firm of “Laudation & Co.” The Major inwardly attributes his indifference to conceited fox-hunting pride. “Looks down upon haryers.”

The field, however, gradually got the steam of praise up to a very high pitch. Indeed, had not Mr. Wotherspoon, who was only an air-and-exercise gentleman, observed, after a pompous pinch of snuff, that he saw by the papers that the House of Lords, of which he considered himself a sort of supernumerary member, were going to do something, or not to do something, caused a check in the cry, there is no saying but they might altogether have forgotten what they had come out about. As it was, the mention of Mr. Wotherspoon's favourite branch of the legislature, from which they had all suffered more or less severely, operated like the hose of a fire-engine upon a crowd, sending one man one way, another another, until Wotherspoon had only Solomon and the hounds to finish off before. “Indeed, sir,” was all the encouragement he got from Solomon. But let us get away from the insufferable Brummagem brandy-faced old bore by supposing Solomon transferred from Napoleon the Great to Bulldog, Billy mounted on the washy horse instead of the weaving mare, the Major's girths drawn, clay pipes deposited in the breast pockets of the owners, and thongs unloosened to commence the all-important operation of thistle-whipping.

At a nod from the Major, Solomon gives a wave of his hand to the hounds, and putting his horse on, the tide of sportsmen sweep after, and Cushetlaw rocks are again left in their pristine composure.



MR. WOTHERSPOON'S SNUFF-BOX.

ASK MAMMA.

Despite Billy's indifference, the Major is still anxious to show to advantage, not knowing who Billy may relate his day's sport to, and has therefore arranged with Solomon not to cast off until they get upon the more favourable ground of Sunny-laws moor. This gives Billy time to settle in his new saddle, and scrape acquaintance with Napoleon, whom he finds a very complacent, easy-going horse. He has a light, playful mouth, and Billy doesn't feel afraid of him. Indeed, if it wasn't for the idea of the jumps, he would rather enjoy it. His mind, however, might have been easy on that score, for they are going into the hills instead of away from them, and the Major has scuttled over the ground so often that he knows every bog, and every crossing, and every vantage-taking line—where to view the hare, and where to catch up his hounds, to a nicety.

At length they reach a pretty, amphitheatreish piece of country, encircled by grassy hills, folding gracefully into each other, with the bolder outline of the Arkenhill moors for the background. A silvery stream meanders carelessly about the lowland, occasionally lost to view by sand wreaths and gravel beds thrown up by impetuous torrents rushing down from the higher grounds.

The field is here reinforced by Tom Springer, the generally out-of-place watcher, and his friend Joe Pitfall, the beer-shop keeper of Wetten hill, with their tenpenny wide-awakes, well-worn, baggy-pocketed shooting-coats, and strong oak staffs, suitable either for leaping or poking poles.

The Major returns their salute with a lowering brow, for he strongly suspects they are there on their own account, and not for the sake of enjoying a day with his unrivalled hounds. However, as neither of them have leave over the ground, they can neither of them find fault, and must just put up with each other. So the Major, addressing Springer, says, "I'll give you a shillin' if you'll find me a hare," as he turns to the Bumbler and bids him uncouple Billy's old friends Ruffler and Bustler. This done, the hounds quickly spread to try and hit off the morning scent, while the myrtle-greeners and others distribute themselves, cracking, flopping, and hissing, here,

ASK MAMMA.

there, and everywhere. Springer and Pitfall go poke, poke, tap, tap, peep, peep, at every likely bush and tuft, but both the Major and they are too often over the ground to allow of hares being very plentiful. When they do find them they are generally well in wind from work.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wotherspoon, finding that Billy Pringle is a friend of Lord Ladythorne's, makes up to him, and speaks of his lordship in the kind, encouraging way, so becoming a great man speaking of a lesser one. "Oh, he knew his lordship well, excellent man he was; knew Mrs. Moffatt, too—'andsome woman she was. Not so 'andsome, p'r'aps, as Mrs. Spangles, the actress, but still a v-a-a-ry 'andsome woman. Ah, he knew Mrs. Spangles, poor thing, long before she came to Tantivy—when she was on the stage, in fact." And here the old buck, putting his massive, gold-mounted riding-whip under his arm, heaved a deep sigh, as though the mention of her name recalled painful recollections, and producing his gold snuff-box, after offering it to Billy, he consoled himself with a long-drawn inspiration from its contents. He then flourished his scarlet, attar-of-rose-scented bandana, and seemed lost in contemplation of the stripes down his trowsers and his little lacquered-toe'd boots. Billy rode silently on with him, making no doubt he was a very great man—just the sort of man his Mamma would wish him to get acquainted with.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WILD BEAST ITSELF.



UST as the old buck was resuming the thread of his fashionable high-life narrative, preparatory to sounding Billy about the Major and his family, the same sort of electric thrill shot through the field that characterised the terrible “G-u-r along—don’t you see the hounds are running?” de Glancey day, with the Earl. Billy felt all over he-didn’t-know-how-ish—very wish-he-was-at-home-ish. The horse, too, began to caper.

The thrill is caused by a shilling’s-worth of wide-awake on a stick held high against the sky-line of the gently-swelling hill on the left, denoting that the wild beast is found, causing the Major to hold up his hat as a signal of reply, and all the rest of the field to desist from their flopping and thistle-whipping, and rein in their screws for the coming conflict.

“Now s-s-sir!” exclaims the stuttering Major, cantering up to our Billy all flurry and enthusiasm. “Now, s-s-sir! we ha-ha-have her, and if you’ll fo-fo-follow me, I’ll show you her,” thinking he was offering Billy the greatest treat imaginable. So saying the Major drops his hands on White Surrey’s neck, rises in his stirrups, and scuttles away, bounding over the gorse bushes and broom that intervened between him and the still stick-hoisted tenpenny.

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“*Where is she?*” demands the Major. “*Where is she?*” repeats he, coming up.

ASK MAMMA.

"A, Major, he mun gi' us halfe-croon ony ho' this time," exclaims our friend Tom Springer, whose head-gear it is that has been hoisted.

"Deed mun ye!" asserts Pitfall, who has now joined his companion.

"No, no!" retorts the Major angrily, "I said a shillin'—a shillin's my price, and you know it."

"Well, but consider what a time we've been a-lookin' for her, Major," replied Springer, mopping his brow.

"Well, but consider that you are about to partake of the enjoyments as well as myself, and that I find the whole of this expensive establishment," retorted the Major, looking back for his hounds. "Not a farthin' subscription."

"Say two shillin's, then," rejoined Springer coaxingly.

"No, no," replied the Major, "a shillin's plenty."

"Make it eighteen-pence then," said Pitfall, "and oop she goes for the money."

"Well, come," snapped the Major hurriedly, as Billy now came elbowing up. "Where is she? Where is she?" demanded he.

"A, she's not here—she's not here, but I see her in her form thonder," replied Springer, nodding towards the adjoining bush-dotted hill.

"Go to her, then," said the Major, jingling the eighteen-pence in his hand, to be ready to give him on view of the hare.

The man then led the way through rushes, brambles, and briars, keeping a steady eye on the spot where she sate. At length he stopped. "There she's, see!" said he, *sotto voce*, pointing to the green hill-side.

"I have her!" whispered the Major, his keen eyes sparkling with delight. "Come here," said he to Billy, "and I'll show her to you. There," said he, "there; you see that patch of gorse with the burnt stick stumps, at the low end—well, carry your eye down the slope of the land, past the old willow tree, and you have her as plain as a pike-staff."

Billy shook his head. He saw nothing but a tuft or two of rough grass.

ASK MAMMA.

"O yes, you see her large eyes watching us," continued the Major, "thinking she sees us without our seeing her."

"No," our friend didn't.

"Very odd," laughed the Major, "very odd," with the sort of vexation a man feels when another can't be made to see the object he does.

"Will you give them a view now?" asked Springer, "or put her away quietly?"

"Oh, put her away quietly," replied the Major, "put her away quietly; and let them get their noses well down to the scent;" adding—"I've got some strange hounds out, and I want to see how they work."

The man then advanced a few paces, and touching one of the apparently lifeless tufts with his pole, out sprung puss and went stotting and dotting away with one ear back and the other forward, in a state of indignant perturbation. "Buck!" exclaims Pitfall, watching her as she goes.

"Doubt it," replied the Major, scrutinising her attentively.

"Nay, look at its head and shoulders; did you ever see sic red shoulders as those on a doe?" asked Springer.

"Well," said the Major, "there's your money," handing Springer the eighteen-pence, "and I hope she'll be worth it; but mind, for the futur' a shillin's my price."

After scudding up the hill, puss stopped to listen and ascertain the quality of her pursuers. She had suffered persecution from many hands, shooters, coursers, snares, and once before from the Major and his harriers. That, however, was on a bad scenting day, and she had not had much difficulty in beating them.

Meanwhile Solomon had been creeping quietly on with his hounds, encouraging such to hunt as seemed inclined that way, though the majority were pretty well aware of the grand discovery, and lean towards the horsemen in advance. Puss, however, has slipped away unseen by the hounds, and Twister darts at the empty form thinking to save all trouble by a chop. Bracelet then strikes a scent in advance, Ruffler and Chaunter confirm it, and after one or two hesitating rushes

ASK MAMMA.

and flourishes, increasing in intensity each time, a scent is fairly established, and away they drive full cry amid exclamations of "Beautiful! beautiful! never saw anything puttier!" from the Major and the field—the music of the hounds being increased and prolonged by the echoes of the valleys and adjacent hills.

The field then fall into line, Silent Solomon first, the Major of course next, Fine Billy third, with Wotherspoon and Nettlefold rather contending for his company. Nabley, Duffield, Bonnet, Rennison, Faulder, Catcheside, truants, all mixed up together in heterogeneous confusion, jostling for precedence as men do when there are no leaps. So they round Hawthorn hill, and pour up the pretty valley beyond, each man riding a good deal harder than his horse, the hounds going best pace, which however is not very great.

"Give me," inwardly prays the Major, cantering sequentially along with his thong-gathered whip held up like a sword, "give me five-and-twenty minutes, the first fifteen a burst, then a fault well hit off, and the remaining ten without a turn," thinking to astonish the supercilious fox-hunter. Then he takes a sly look to see how Napoleon is faring, it being by no means his intention to let Fine Billy get to the bottom of him.

On, on, the hounds press, for now is the time to enjoy the scent with a hare, and they have run long enough together to have confidence in their leaders.

Now Lovely has the scent, now Lilter, now Ruffler flings in advance, and again is superseded by Twister.

They brush through the heathery open with an increasing cry, and fling at the cross-road between Birwell Mill and Capstone with something like the energy of foxhounds; Twister catches it up beyond the sandy track, and hurrying over it, some twenty yards further on is superseded by Lovely, who hits it off to the left.

Away she goes with the lead.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" exclaims the Major, hoping the fox-hunter sees it.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" echoes Nettlefold, as the clustering

ASK MAMMA.

pack drop their sterns to the scent and push forward with renewed velocity.

The Major again looks for our friend Billy, who is riding in a very careless slack-rein sort of style, not at all adapted for making the most of his horse. However it is no time for remonstrance, and the music of the hounds helps to make things pleasant. On, on they speed; up one hill, down another, round a third, and so on.

One great advantage of hunting in a strange country undoubtedly is that all runs are straight, with harriers as well as foxhounds, with some men, who ride over the same ground again and again without knowing that it is the same, and Billy was one of this sort. Though they rounded Hawthorn hill again, it never occurred to him that it was the second time of asking; indeed he just cantered carelessly on like a man on a watering-place hack, thinking when his hour will be out, regardless of the beautiful hits made by Lovely and Lilter or any of them, and which almost threw the Major and their respective admirers into ecstasies. Great was the praise bestowed upon their performances, it being the interest of every man to magnify the run and astonish the stranger. Had they but known as much of the Richest Commoner as the reader does, they would not have given themselves the trouble.

Away they pour over hill and dale, over soft ground and sound, through reedy rushes and sedgy flats, and over the rolling stones of the fallen rocks.

Then they score away full cry on getting upon more propitious ground. What a cry they make! and echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound.

Napoleon the Great presently begins to play the castanets with his feet, an ominous sound to our Major, who looks back for the Bumbler, and inwardly wishes for a check to favour his design of dismounting our hero.

Half a mile or so further on, and the chance occurs. They get upon a piece of bare heather burnt ground, whose peaty smell baffles the scent, and brings the hounds first to a check, then to a stand-still.



WAITING FOR "A VIEW."

ASK MAMMA.

Solomon's hand in the air beckons a halt, to which the field gladly respond, for many of the steeds are eating new oats, and do not get any great quantity of those, while some are on Swedes, and others only have hay. Altogether their condition is not to be spoken of.

The Major now all hurry-scurry—just like a case of “second horses! second horses! where's my fellow with my second horse?” at a check in Leicestershire—beckons the Bumbler up to Billy; and despite of our friend's remonstrance, who has got on such terms with Napoleon as to allow of his taking the liberty of spurring him, and would rather remain where he is, insists upon putting him upon the mare again, observing, that he couldn't think of taking the only spare 'orse from a gen'l'man who had done him the distinguished honour of leaving the Earl's establishment for his 'umble pack; and so, in the excitement of the moment, Billy is hustled off one horse and hurried on to another, as if a moment's hesitation would be fatal to the fray. The Major then, addressing the Bumbler in an undertone, says, “Now walk that 'orse quietly home, and get him some linseed tea, and have him done up by the time we get in.” He then spurs gallantly up to the front, as though he expected the hounds to be off again at score. There was no need of such energy, for puss has set them a puzzle that will take them some time to unravel; but it saved an argument with Billy, and perhaps the credit of the bay. He now goes drooping and slouching away, very unlike the cock-horse he came out.

Meanwhile, the hounds have shot out and contracted, and shot out and contracted—and tried and tested, and tried and tested—every tuft and every inch of burnt ground, while Solomon sits motionless between them and the head-mopping, chattering field.

“Must be on,” observes Caleb Rennison, the horse-breaker, whose three-year-old began fidgeting and neighing.

“Back, I say,” speculated Bonnet, whose domicile lay to the rear.

“Very odd,” observed Captain Nabley, “they ran her well to here.”

ASK MAMMA.

"Hares are queer things," said old Duffield, wishing he had her by the ears for the pot.

"Far more hunting with a hare nor a fox," observes Mr. Rintoul, who always praised his department of the chase.

"Must have squatted," observes old Wotherspoon, taking a pinch of snuff, and placing his double gold eye-glasses on his nose to reconnoitre the scene.

"Lies very close, if she has," rejoins Godfrey Faulder, flopping at a furze-bush as he spoke.

"Lost her, I fear," ejaculated Mr. Trail, who meant to beg her for a christening dinner if they killed.

The fact is, puss having, as we said before, had a game at romps with her pursuers on a bad scenting day, when she regulated her speed by their pace, has been inconveniently pressed on the present occasion, and feeling her strength fail, has had recourse to some of the many arts for which hares are famous. After crossing the burnt ground she made for a greasy sheep-track, up which she ran some fifty yards, and then deliberately retracing her steps, threw herself with a mighty spring into a rushy furze patch at the bottom of the hill. She now lies heaving and panting, and watching the success of her stratagem from her ambush, with the terror-striking pack full before her.

And now having accommodated Mr. Pringle with a second horse, perhaps the reader will allow us to take a fresh pen and finish the run in another chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A CRUEL FINISH



VERY hound having at length sniffed and snuffed, and sniffed and snuffed, to satiety, Solomon now essays to assist them by casting round the flat of smoke-infected ground. He makes the head good first, which manœuvre hitting off the scent, he is hailed and applauded as a conqueror. Never was such a huntsman as Solomon! First harrier huntsman in England! Worth any money as a huntsman! The again clamorous pack bustle up the sheep-path, at such a pace as sends the leaders hurrying far beyond the scent. Then the rear rush to the front, and a general spread of bewildered, benighted confusion ensues.

"Where *has* she got to?" is the question.

"Doubled!" mutters the disappointed Major, reining in his steed.

"Squatted!" exclaims Mr. Rintoul, who always sported an opinion.

"Hold hard!" cries Mr. Trail, though they were all at a stand-still; but then he wished to let them know he was there.

The leading hounds retrace their steps, and again essay to carry the scent forward. The second effort is attended with the same result as the first. They cannot get it beyond the double.

"Cunning animal!" mutters the Major, eyeing their endeavours.

"Far more hunt with a hare nor a fox," now observes Mr. Bonnet, raising his white hat to cool his bald head.

ASK MAMMA.

“Far!” replies Mr. Faulder, thinking he must be off.

“If it weren’t for the red coats there wouldn’t be so many fox-hunters,” chuckles old Duffield, who dearly loves roast hare.

Solomon is puzzled; but as he doesn’t profess to be wiser than the hounds, he just lets them try to make it out for themselves. If they can’t wind her, he can’t; so the old sage sits like a statue.

At length the majority give her up.

And now Springer and Pitfall, and two or three other pedestrians who have been attracted from their work by the music of the hounds, and have been enjoying the panorama of the chase with their pipes from the summit of an inside hill, descend to see if they can either prick her or pole her.

Down go their heads as if they were looking for a pin. The hounds, however, have obliterated all traces of her, and they soon have recourse to their staves.

Bang, bang, bang, they beat the gorse and broom and juniper bushes with vigorous sincerity. Crack, flop, crack, go the field in aid of their endeavours. Solomon leans with his hounds to the left, which is lucky for puss, for though she withstood the downward blow of Springer’s pole on her bush, a well-directed side-thrust sends her flying out in a state of the greatest excitement. What an outburst of joy the sight of her occasioned! Hounds, horses, riders, all seemed to participate in the common enthusiasm! How they whooped, and halloo’d, and shouted! enough to frighten the poor thing out of her wits. Billy and the field have a grand view of her, for she darts first to the right, then to the left, then to the right and again to the left, ere she tucks her long legs under her and strides up Fleeope hill at a pace that looks quite unapproachable. Faulder alone remains where he is, muttering “fresh har’” as she goes.

The Major and all the rest of the field hug their horses and tear along in a state of joyous excitement, for they see her life is theirs. They keep the low ground and jump with the hounds at the bridle-gate between Greenlaw sheep-walks and Hindhope cairn, just as Lovely hits the scent off over the boundary wall,

ASK MAMMA.

and the rest of the pack endorse her note. They are now on fresh ground, which greatly aids the efforts of the hounds, who push on with a head that the Major thinks ought to procure them a compliment from Billy. Our friend, however, keeps all his compliments for the ladies, not being aware that there is anything remarkable in the performance, which he now begins to wish at an end. He has ridden as long as he likes, quite as much as Mr. Spavin, or any of the London livery stable-keepers, would let him have for half-a-guinea. Indeed he wishes he mayn't have got more than is good for him.

The Major meanwhile, all energy and enthusiasm, rides gallantly forward, for though he is no great hand among the enclosures, he makes a good fight in the hills, especially when, as now, he knows every yard of the country. Many's the towel he's had over it, though to look at his excited face one would think this was his first hunt. He'll now "bet half-a-crown they kill her!" He'll "bet a guinea they kill her!" He'll "bet a fi-pun note they kill her!" He'll "bet half the national debt they kill her!" as Dainty, and Lovely, and Bustler, after dwelling and hesitating over some rushy ground, at length proclaim the scent beyond.

Away they all sweep like the careering wind. On follow the field in glorious excitement. A flock of black-faced sheep next foil the ground—sheep as wild, if not wilder, than the animal the hounds are pursuing. We often think, when we see these strong-scented animals scouring the country, that a good beast of chase has been overlooked for the stag. Why shouldn't an old wiry black-faced tup, with his wild sparkling eyes and spiral horns, afford as good a run as a home-fed deer? Start the tup in his own rough region, and we will be bound to say he will give the hounds and their followers a scramble. The Major now denounces the flying flock—"Oh, those nasty muttons!" exclaims he, "bags of bone rather, for they won't be meat these five years. Wonder how any sane people can cultivate such animals."

The hounds hunt well through the difficulty, or the Major would have been more savage still. On they go, yapping and

towling, and howling as before, the Major's confidence in a kill increasing at every stride.

The terror-striking shouts that greeted poor puss's exit from the bush, have had the effect as well of driving her out of her country as of pressing her beyond her strength; and she has no sooner succeeded in placing what she hopes is a comfortable distance between herself and her pursuers, than she again has recourse to those tricks* with which nature has so plentifully endowed her. Sinking the hill, she makes for the little enclosed allotments below, and selecting a bare fallow—bare, except in the matter of whicken grass—she steals quietly in, and commences her performances on the least verdant part of it.

First she described a small circle, then she sprang into the middle of it and squatted. Next she jumped up and bounded out in a different direction to the one by which she had entered. She then ran about twenty yards up a furrow, retracing her steps backwards and giving a roll near where she started from. Then she took three bounding springs to the left, which landed her on the hard headland, and creeping along the side of the wall she finally popped through the water-hole, and squeezed into an incredibly small space between the kerbstone and the gate-post. There she lay with her head to the air, panting and heaving, and listening to her dread pursuers coming. O what agony was hers!

Presently the gallant band came howling and towling over the hill, in all the gay delirium of a hunt without leaps—the Major with difficulty restraining their ardour as he pointed out the brilliance of the performance to Billy—"Most splendid running! most capital hunting! most superb pack!" with a sly "*pish*" and "*shaw*" at foxhounds in general, and Sir Mosey's in particular. The Major hadn't got over the Bo-peep business, and never would.

The pack now reached the scene of puss's frolics, and the music very soon descended from a towering tenor to an insignificant whimper, which at length died out altogether. Solomon and Bulldog were again fixtures, Solomon as usual with his hand up beckoning silence. He knew how weak the

ASK MAMMA.

scent must be, and how important it was to keep quiet at such a critical period; and let the hounds hit her off if they could.

Puss had certainly given them a Gordian knot to unravel, and not all the hallooing and encouragement in the world could drive them much beyond the magic circle she had described. Whenever the hunt seemed likely to be re-established, it invariably resulted in a return to the place from whence they started. They couldn't get forward with it at all, and poked about, and tested the same ground over and over again.

It was a regular period of full stop.

"Very rum," observed Caleb Rennison, looking first at his three-years-old, then at his watch, thinking that it was about pudding-time.

"She's surely a witch," said Mr. Wotherspoon, taking a prolonged pinch of snuff.

"We'll roast her for one at all events," laughed Mr. Trail, the auctioneer, still hoping to get her.

"First catch your hare, says Mrs. Somebody," responded Captain Nabley, eyeing the sorely puzzled pack.

"O ketch her! we're sure to ketch her," observed Mr. Nettlefold, chucking up his chin and dismounting.

"Not so clear about that," muttered Mr. Rintoul, as Lovely, and Bustler and Lilter, again returned to repeat the search.

"If those hounds can't own her, there are no hounds in England can," asserted the Major, anxious to save the credit of his pack before the—he feared—too critical stranger.

At this depressing moment, again come the infantry, and commence the same system of peering and poking that marked their descent on the former occasion.

And now poor puss being again a little recruited, steals out of her hiding-place, and crosses quietly along the outside of the wall to where a flock of those best friends to a hunted hare, some newly-smear'd, white-faced sheep, were quietly nibbling at the half-grass, half-heather, of the little moor-edge farm of Mossheugh-law, whose stone-roofed buildings, washed by a clear mountain stream, and sheltered by a clump of venerable



PUSS FINDS A REFUGE.

ASK MAMMA.

Scotch firs, stand on a bright green patch, a sort of oasis in the desert. The sheep hardly deign to notice the hare, far different to the consternation bold Reynard carries into their camp, when they go circling round like a squadron of dragoons, drawing boldly up to charge when the danger's past. So poor, weary, foot-sore, fur-matted puss goes hobbling and limping up to the farm-buildings, as if to seek protection from man against his brother man.

Now it so happened that Mrs. Kidwell, the half-farmer, half-shepherd's pretty wife, was in the fold-yard, washing her churn, along with her little chubby-faced Jessey, who was equally busy with her Mamma munching away at a very long slice of plentifully-buttered and sugared bread; and Mamma chancing to look up from the churn to see how her darling progressed, saw puss halting at the threshold, as if waiting to be asked in.

"It's that mad old Major and his dogs!" exclaimed Mrs. Kidwell, catching up the child lest its red petticoat might scare away the visitor, and popping into the dairy, she saw the hare, after a little demur, hobble into the cow-house. Having seen her well in, Mrs. Kidwell emerged from her hiding-place, and locking the door, she put the key in her pocket, and resumed her occupation with her churn. Presently the familiar melody—the yow, yow, yap, yap, yow, yow of the hounds broke upon her ear, increasing in strength as she listened, making her feel glad she was at hand to befriend the poor hare.

The hunt was indeed revived. The hounds, one and all, having declared their inability to make anything more of it, Solomon had set off on one of his cruises, which resulted in the yeomen pricklers and he meeting at the gate, where the hare had squatted, when Lovely gave tongue, just as Springer, with his eyes well down, exclaimed, "*Here she's!*" Bustler, and Bracelet, and Twister, and Chaunter, confirmed Lovely's opinion, and away they went with the feeble scent peculiar to the sinking animal. Their difficulties are further increased by the sheep, it requiring Solomon's oft-raised hand to prevent the hounds being hurried over the line—as it is, the hunt was conducted on the silent system for some little distance. The

ASK MAMMA.

pace rather improved after they got clear of the smear and foil of the muttons, and the Major pulled up his gills, felt his tie, and cocked his hat jauntily, as the hounds pointed for the pretty farmhouse, the Major thinking to show off to advantage before Mrs. Kidwell. They presently carried the scent up to the still open gates of the fold-yard. Lovely now proclaims where puss has paused. Things look very critical.

"Good mornin', Mrs. Kidwell," exclaimed the gallant Major, addressing her; "pray how long have you been at the churn?"

"O, this twenty minutes or more, Major," replied Mrs. Kidwell, gaily.

"You haven't got the hare in it, have you?" asked he.

"Not that I know of; but you can look if you like," replied Mrs. Kidwell, colouring slightly.

"Why, no; we'll take your word for it," rejoined the Major, gallantly. "Must be on, Solomon; must be on," said he—nodding his huntsman to proceed.

Solomon is doubtful, but "master being master," Solomon holds his hounds on past the stable, round the lambing-sheds and stackyard, to the front of the little three windows and a doored farmhouse, without eliciting a whimper, no, not even from a babbler.

Just at this moment a passing cloud discharged a gentle shower over the scene, and when Solomon returned to pursue his inquiries in the fold-yard, the last vestige of scent had been effectually obliterated.

Mrs. Kidwell now stood watching the inquisitive proceedings of the party, searching now the hen-house, now the pig-stye, now the ash-hole; and when Solomon tried the cow-house door, she observed carelessly: "Ah, that's locked;" and he passed on to examine the straw-shed adjoining. All places were overhauled and scrutinised. At length, even Captain Nabley's detective genius failed in suggesting where puss could be.

"Where did you see her last?" asked Mrs. Kidwell, with well-feigned ignorance.

ASK MAMMA.

"Why, we've not seen her for some time; but the hounds hunted her up to your very gate," replied the Major.

"Deary me, how strange! and you've made nothin' of her since?" observed she.

"Nothin'," assented the Major, reluctantly.

"Very odd," observed Mr. Catcheside, who was anxious for a kill.

"Never saw nothin' like it," asserted Mr. Rintoul, looking again into the pig-stye.

"She must have doubled back," suggested Mr. Nettlefold.

"Should have met her if she had," observed old Duffield.

"She must be somewhere hereabouts," observes Mr. Trail, dismounting, and stamping about on foot among the half-trodden straw of the fold-yard.

No puss there.

"Hard upon the hounds," observes Mr. Wotherspoon, replenishing his nose with a good charge of snuff.

"*Cruel*, indeed," assented the Major, who never gave them more than entrails.

"Never saw a hare better hunted!" exclaimed Captain Nabley, lighting a cigar.

"Nor I," assented fat Mr. Nettlefold, mopping his brow.

"How long was it?" asked Mr. Rintoul.

"An hour and five minutes," replied the Major, looking at his watch (five-and-forty minutes in reality).

"V-a-a-ry good running," elaborates old dandy Wotherspoon.

"I see by the *Post*, that——"

"Well, I s'pose we must give her up," interrupted the Major, who didn't want to have the contents of his own second-hand copy forestalled.

"Pity to leave her," observes Mr. Trail, returning to his horse.

"What can you do?" asked the Major, adding, "It's no use sitting here."

"None," assents Captain Nabley, blowing a cloud.

At a nod from the Major, Solomon now collects his hounds, and passing through the scattered group, observes with a sort of Wellingtonian touch of his cap, in reply to their condolence,

ASK MAMMA.

“Yes, sir, but it takes a *slee* chap, sir, to kill a moor-edge hare, sir!”

So the poor Major was foiled of his fur, and when the cows came lowing down from the fell to be milked, kind Mrs. Kidwell opened the door and out popped puss, as fresh and lively as ever; making for her old haunts, where she was again to be found at the end of a week.

CHAPTER XL.

THE PRINGLE CORRESPONDENCE.



HE reader will perhaps wonder what our fair friend Mrs. Pringle is about, and how there happens to be no tidings from Curtain Crescent. Tidings there were, only the Tantivy Castle servants were so oppressed with work that they could never find time to redirect her effusions. At length Mr. Beverage, seeing the accumulation of letters in Mr. Packwood, the house-steward's room, suggested that they might perhaps be wanted, whereupon Mr. Packwood huddled them into a fresh envelope, and sent them to the post along with the general consignment from the Castle. Very pressing and urgent the letters were, increasing in anxiety with each one, as no answer had been received to its predecessor. Were it not that Mrs. Pringle knew the Earl would have written, she would have feared her Billy had sustained some hunting calamity. The first letter merely related how Mrs. Pringle had gone to Uncle Jerry's according to appointment to have a field-day among the papers, and how Jerry had gone to attend an anti-Sunday-band meeting, leaving seed-cake, and sponge-cake, and wine, with a very affectionate three-cornered note, saying how deeply he deplored the necessity, but how he hoped to remedy the delay by another and an early appointment. This letter enclosed a very handsome large coat-of-arms seal, made entirely out of Mrs. Pringle's own head—containing what the heralds call assumptive arms—divided into as many compartments as a backgammon board, which she advised Billy to use judiciously,

ASK MAMMA. .

hinting that Major H. (meaning our friend Major Y.) would be a fitter person to try it upon than Lord L. The next letter, among many other things of minor importance, reminded Billy that he had not told his Mamma what Mrs. Moffatt had on, or whether they had any new dishes for dinner, and urging him to write her full particulars, but to be careful not to leave either his or her letters lying about, and hoping that he emptied his pockets every night instead of leaving that for Rougier to do, and giving him much other good and wholesome advice. The third letter was merely to remind him that she had not heard from him in answer to either of her other two, and begging him just to drop her a single line by return of post, saying he was well, and so on. The next was larger, enclosing him a double-crest seal, containing a lion on a cap of dignity, and an eagle, for sealing notes in aid of the great seal, and saying that she had had a letter from Uncle Jerry, upbraiding her for not keeping her appointment with him, whereas she had never made any, he having promised to make one with her, and again urging Billy to write to her, if only a single line, and when he had time to send her a full account of what Mrs. Moffatt had on every day, and whether they had any new dishes for dinner, and all the news, sporting and otherwise, urging him as before to take care of Dowb (meaning himself), and hoping he was improving in his hunting, able to sit at the jumps, and enjoying himself generally.

The fifth, which caused the rest to come, was a mere repetition of her anxieties and requests for a line, and immediately produced the following letter :—

MR. WILLIAM TO HIS MAMMA.

“YAMMERTON GRANGE.

“MY DEAREST MAMMA,

“Your letters have all reached me at once, for though both Rougier and I especially charged the butler and another fine fellow, and gave them heads to put on, to send all that came immediately, they seemed to have waited for an

ASK MAMMA.

accumulation so as to make one sending do. It is very idle of them.

“These seals are beautiful, and I am very much obliged to you for them. I will seal this letter with the large one by way of a beginning. It seems to be uncommonly well quartered—quite noble. I will now tell you all my movements.

“I have been here at Major Yammerton’s—not Hammerton’s as you called him—for some days enjoying myself amazingly, for the Major has a nice pack of harriers that go along leisurely, instead of tearing away at the unconscionable pace the Earl’s do. Still, a canter in the Park at high tide in my opinion is a much better thing with plenty of ladies looking on. Talking of cantering reminds me I’ve bought a horse of the Major’s—bought him all except paying for him, so you had better send me the money, one hundred guineas; for though the Major says I may pay for him when I like, and seems quite easy about it, they say horses are always ready money, so I suppose I must conform to the rule. It is a beautiful bay with four black legs, and a splendid mane and tail—very blood-like and racing; indeed the Major says if I was to put him into some of the spring handicaps I should be sure to win a hatful of money with him, or perhaps a gold cup or two. The Major is a great sportsman and has kept hounds for a great number of years, and altogether he is very agreeable, and I feel more at home here than I did at the Castle, where, though everything was very fine, still there was no fun and only Mrs. Moffatt to talk to, at least in the lady way, for though she always professed to be expecting lady callers, none ever came that I saw or heard of.

“I really forget all about the dinners there, except that they were very good and lasted a long time. We had a new dish here the other night, which if you want a novelty, you can introduce, namely, to flavour the plates with castor-oil; you will find it a very serviceable one for saving your meat, as nobody can eat it. Mrs. Moffatt was splendidly dressed every day, sometimes in blue, sometimes in pink, sometimes in green, sometimes in silk, sometimes in satin, sometimes in velvet with

ASK MAMMA.

a profusion of very lovely lace and magnificent jewelry. Rougier says, 'she makes de hay vile the son does shine.'

"I don't know how long I shall stay here, certainly over Friday, and most likely until Monday, after which I suppose I shall go back to the Castle. The Major says I must have another day with his hounds, and I don't care if I do, provided he keeps in the hills and away from the jumps, as I can manage the galloping well enough. It's the jerks that send me out of my saddle. A hare is quite a different animal to pursue to a fox, and seems to have some sort of consideration for its followers. She stops short every now and then and jumps up in view, instead of tearing away like an express train on a railway.

"The girls here are very pretty—Miss Yammerton extremely so—fair, with beautiful blue eyes, and *such* a figure; but Rougier says they are desperately bad-tempered, except the youngest one, who is dark and like her Mamma; but I shouldn't say Monsieur is a particular sweet-tempered gentleman himself. He is always grumbling and growling about what he calls his 'grob,' and declares the Major keeps his house on sturdied mutton and stale beer. But he complained at the Castle that there was nothing but port and sherry, and composite candles to go to bed with, which he declared was an insult to his station, which entitles him to wax.

"You can't think how funny and small this place looked after the Castle. It seemed just as if I had got into a series of closets instead of rooms. However, I soon got used to it, and like it amazingly. But here comes Monsieur with my dressing things, so I must out with the great seal and bid you good-bye for the present, for the Major is a six o'clock man, and doesn't like to be kept waiting for his dinner, so now, my dearest Mamma, believe me to remain ever your most truly affectionate son,

"WM. PRINGLE."

To which we need scarcely say the delighted Mrs. Pringle replied by return of post, writing in the following loving and judicious strain.

ASK MAMMA.

"25, CURTAIN CRESCENT,
"BELGRAVE SQUARE.

"MY OWN BELOVED DARLING,

"I was so overjoyed you can't imagine, to receive your most welcome letter, for I really began to be uneasy about you, not that I feared any accident out hunting, but I was afraid you might have caught cold or be otherwise unwell—mind, if ever you feel in the slightest degree indisposed send for the doctor *immediately*. There is nothing like taking things in time. It was very idle of the servants at Tantivy Castle to neglect your instructions so, but for the future you had better always write a line to the post-master of the place where you are staying, giving him your next address to forward your letters to; for it is the work for which they are paid, and there is no shuffling it off on to anybody else's shoulders. The greatest people are oftentimes the worst served, not because the servants have any particular objection to them personally—but because they are so desperately afraid of being what they call put upon by each other, that they spend double the time in fighting off doing a thing that it would take to do it. This is one of the drawbacks upon rank. Noblemen must keep a great staff of people, whom in a general way they cannot employ, and who do nothing but squabble and fight with each other who is to do the little there is, the greatest man among servants being he who does the least. However, as you have got the letters at last we will say no more about it.

"I hope your horse is handsome, and neighs and paws the ground prettily; you should be careful, however, in buying, for few people are magnanimous enough to resist cheating a young man in horses;—still, I am glad you have bought one if he suits you, as it is much better and pleasanter to ride your own horse than be indebted to other people for mounts. Nevertheless, I would strongly advise you to stick to either the fox or the stag, with either of which you can sport pink and look smart. Harriers are only for bottle-nosed old gentlemen with gouty shoes. I can't help thinking, that a day with a milder, more reasonable fox than the ones you had with Lord

ASK MAMMA.

Ladythorne, would convince you of the superiority of fox-hounds over harriers. I was asking Mr. Ralph Rasper, who called here the other day, how little Tom Stott of the Albany managed with the Queen's, and he said Tom always shoes his horses with country nails, and consequently throws a shoe before he has gone three fields, which enables him to pull up and lament his ill-luck. He then gets it put on, and has a glorious ride home in red—landing at the Piccadilly end of the Albany about dusk. He then goes down to the Acacia or some other Club, and having ordered his dinner, retires to one of the dressing-rooms to change—having had, to his mind, a delightful day.

*“Beware of the girls!—*There's nothing so dangerous as a young man staying in a country house with pretty girls. He is sure to fall in love with one or other of them imperceptibly, or one or other of them is sure to fall in love with him; and then when at length he leaves, there is sure to be a little scene arranged, Miss with her red eyelids and lace fringed kerchief, Mamma with her smirks and smiles, and hopes that he'll ‘soon return,’ and so on. There are more matches made up in country houses than in all the west-end London ones put together—indeed, London is always allowed to be only the cover for finding the game in, and the country the place for running it down. Just as you find your fox in a wood and run him down in the open. *Be careful therefore what you are about.*

“It is much easier to get entangled with a girl than to get free again, for though they will always offer to set a young man free, they know better than do it, unless, indeed, they have secured something better—above all, never consult a male friend in these matters.

“The stupidest woman that ever was born, is better than the cleverest man in love-affairs. In fact, no man is a match for a woman until he's married—not all even then. The worst of young men is, they never know their worth until it is too late—they think the girls are difficult to catch, whereas there is nothing so easy, unless, as I said before, the girls are

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better engaged. Indeed, a young man should always have his Mamma at his elbow, to guard him against the machinations of the fair. As, however, that cannot be, let me urge you to be cautious what you are about, and as you seem to have plenty of choice, *Don't be more attentive to one sister than to another*, by which means you will escape the red eyelids, and also escape having Mamma declaring you have trifled with Maria or Sophia's feelings, and all the old women of the neighbourhood denouncing your conduct, and making up to you themselves for one of their own girls. Some ladies ask a man's intentions before he is well aware that he has any himself, but these are the spoil-sport order of women. Most of them are prudent enough to get a man well hooked before they hand him over to Papa. It is generally a case of 'Ask Mamma' first. *Beware of brothers!*—I have known undoubted heiresses crumpled up into nothing by the appearance (after the catch) of two or three great heavy dragoons. Rougier will find all that out for you.

"Be cautious too about letter-writing. There is no real privacy about love-letters, any more than there is about the flags and banners of a regiment, though they occasionally furl and cover them up. The love-letters are a woman's flags and banners, her trophies of success, and the more flowery they are, the more likely to be shown, and to aid in enlivening a Christmas tea-party. Then the girls' Mammams read them, their sisters read them, their maids read them, and ultimately, perhaps, a boisterous energetic barrister reads them to an exasperated jury, some of whose daughters may have suffered from similar effusions themselves. Altogether, I assure you, you are on very ticklish ground, and I make no doubt if you could ascertain the opinion of the neighbourhood, you are booked for one or other of the girls, so again, I say, my dearest boy, *beware what you are about*, for it is much easier to get fast than to get free again;—get a lady of rank, and not the daughter of a little scrubby squire; and whatever you do, don't leave this letter lying about, and mind, empty your pockets at nights, and don't leave it for Rougier to find.

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“Now, about your movements. I think I wouldn’t go back to Lord L.’s unless he asks you, or unless he named a specific day for your doing so when you came away. Mere general invitations mean nothing; they are only the small coin of good society. ‘Sorry you’re going. Hope we shall soon meet again. Hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you to dinner some day,’ is a very common mean-nothing form of politeness.

“Indeed, I question that your going to a master of harriers from Tantivy Castle would be any great recommendation to his lordship, for masters of foxhounds and masters of harriers are generally at variance. Altogether, I think I would pause and consider before you decided on returning. I would not talk much about his lordship where you now are, as it would look as if you were not accustomed to great people. You’ll find plenty of friends ready to bring him in for you, just as Mr. Handycock brings in Lord Privilege in *Peter Simple*. We all like talking of titles. Remember, all noblemen under the rank of dukes are lords in common conversation. No earls or marquises then.

“It just occurs to me, that as you are in the neighbourhood, you might take advantage of the opportunity for paying a visit to Yawnington Hot Wells, where you will find a great deal of good society assembled at this time of year, and where you might pick up some useful and desirable acquaintances. Go to the best hotel, whatever it is, and put Rougier on board wages, which will get rid of his grumbling. It is impertinent, no doubt, but still it carries weight in a certain quarter.

“As you have got a hunting horse, you will want a groom, and should try to get a nice-looking one. He should not be knock-knee’d; on the contrary, bow-legged—the sort of legs that a pig can pop through. Look an applicant over first, and if his appearance is against him, just put him off quietly by taking his name and address, and say that there are one or two before him, and that you will write to him if you are likely to require his services.

“You will soon have plenty to choose from, but it is hard to

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say whether the tricks of the town ones, or the *gaucheries* of the country ones are most objectionable. The latter never put on their boots and upper things properly. A slangy, slovenly-looking fellow should be especially avoided. Also men with great shock heads of hair. If they can't trim themselves, there will not be much chance of their trimming their horses. In short, I believe a groom—a man who really knows and cares anything about horses—is a very difficult person to get. There are plenty who can hiss and fuss, and be busy upon nothing, but very few who can both dress a horse, and dress themselves.

“I know Lord Ladythorne makes it a rule never to take one who has been brought up in the racing-stable, for he says they are all hurry and gallop, and for putting two hours' exercise into one. Whatever you do, don't take one without a character, for however people may gloss over their late servant's faults and imperfections, and however abject and penitent the applicants may appear, rely upon it nature will out, and as soon as ever they get up their condition, as they call it, or are installed into their new clothes, they begin to take liberties, and ultimately relapse into their old drunken dissolute habits. It is fortunate for the world that most of them carry their characters in their faces. Besides, it isn't fair to respectable servants to bring them in contact with these sort of profligates.

“Whatever you do, don't let him find his own clothes. There isn't one in twenty who can be trusted to do so, and nothing looks worse than the half-livery, half-plain, wholly shabby clothes some of them adopt.

“It is wonderful what things they will vote good if they have to find others themselves, things that they would declare were not fit to put on, and they couldn't be seen in if master supplied them. The best of everything then is only good enough for them.

“Some of them will grumble and growl whatever you give them; declare this man's cloth is bad, and another's boots inferior, and recommend you to go to Mr. Somebody else, who

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Mr. This, or Captain That, employs, Mr. This, or Captain That, having, in all probability, been recommended to this Mr. Somebody by some other servant. The same with the saddlers and tradespeople generally. If you employ a saddler who does not tip them, there will be nothing bad enough for his workmanship, or they will declare he does not do that sort of work, only farmers' work—cart-trappings, and such-like things.

“The remedy for this is to pay your own bills, and give the servants to understand at starting that you mean to be master. They are to be had on your own terms, if you only begin as you mean to go on. If the worst comes to the worst, a month's notice or a month's pay settles all differences, and it is no use keeping and paying a servant that doesn't suit you. Perhaps you will think Rougier trouble enough, but he would be highly offended if you were to ask him to valet a horse. I will try if I can hear of anything likely to suit you, but the old saying, ‘who shall counsel a man in the choice of a wife, or a horse,’ applies with equal force to grooms.

“And now, my own dearest boy, having given you all the advice and assistance in my power, I will conclude by repeating what joy the arrival of your letter occasioned me, and also my advice to *beware of the girls*, and request that you will not leave this letter in your pockets, or lying about, by signing myself ever, my own dearest son, your most truly loving and affectionate Mamma,

“EMMA PRINGLE.

“P.S.—I will enclose the halves of two fifty-pound notes for the horse, the receipt of which please to acknowledge by return of post, when I will send the other halves.

“P.S.—*Mind the red eyelids!* There's nothing so infectious.”

CHAPTER XLI.

SIR MOSES MAINCHANCE.



OUR friend Billy, as the foregoing letter shows, was now very comfortably installed in his quarters, and his presence brought sundry visitors, as well to pay their respects to him and the family, as to see how matters were progressing.

Mr. and Mrs. Rocket Larkspur, Mrs. Blurkins, and Mrs. Dotherington, also Mrs. Crickleton, came after their castor-oil entertainment, and Mrs. and Miss Wasperton, accompanied by their stiff friend, Miss Freezer, who had the reputation of being very satirical. Then there were Mr. Tight, and Miss Neate, chaperoned by fat Mrs. Plumberry, of Hollingdale Lodge, and several others. In fact Billy had created a sensation in the country, such godsend as a London dandy not being of everyday occurrence in the country, and everybody wanted to see the great "catch." How they magnified him! His own mother wouldn't have known him under the garbs he assumed; now a Lord's son, now a Baronet's, now the Richest Commoner in England; with, oh glorious recommendation! no Papa to consult in the matter of a wife. Some said not even a Mamma, but there the reader knows they were wrong. In proportion as they lauded Billy they decried Mrs. Yammerton; she was a nasty, cunning, designing woman, always looking after somebody.

Mrs. Wasperton, alluding to Billy's age, declared that it was just like kidnapping a child, and she inwardly congratulated herself that she had never been guilty of such meanness. Billy,

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on his part, was airified and gay, showing off to the greatest advantage, perfectly unconscious that he was the observed of all observers. Like Mrs. Moffatt, he never had the same dress on twice, and was splendid in his jewelry.

Among the carriage company who came to greet him was the sporting baronet, Sir Moses Mainchance, whose existence we have already indicated, being the same generous gentleman that presented Major Yammerton with a horse, and then made him pay for it.

Sir Moses had heard of Billy's opulence, and being a man of great versatility, he saw no reason why he should not endeavour to partake of it. He now came grinding up in his dogcart, with his tawdry cockaded groom (for he was a Deputy-Lieutenant of Hit-im-and-Hold-im-shire), to lay the foundation of an invitation, and was received with the usual *wow, wow, wow, wow*, of Fury, the terrier, and the coat shuffling of the Bumbler.

If the late handsome Recorder of London had to present this ugly old file to the Judges as one of the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex, he would most likely introduce him in such terms as the following :—

“ My Lords, I have the honour to present to your Lordships’ (hem) notice Sir Moses Mainchance, (cough) Baronet and (hem) fox-hunter, who has been unanimously chosen by the (hem) livery of London to fill the high and important (cough) office of Sheriff of that ancient and opulent city. My Lords, Sir Moses, as his name indicates, is of Jewish origin. His great-grandfather, Mr. Moses Levy, I believe dealt in complicated penknives, dog-collars, and street sponges. His grandfather more ambitious, enlarged his sphere of action, and embarked in the old-clothes line. He had a very extensive shop in the Minories, and dealt in rhubarb and gum arabic as well. He married a lady of the name of Smith, not an uncommon one in this country, who inheriting a large fortune from her uncle, Mr. Mainchance, Mr. Moses Levy embraced Christianity, and dropping the name of Levy, became Mr. Mainchance, Mr. Moses Mainchance, the founder of the present most important and distinguished family. His son, the Sheriff elect’s father, also

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carried on the business in the Minories, adding very largely to his already abundant wealth, and espousing a lady of the name of Brown.

“In addition to the hereditary trade he opened a curiosity shop in the west end of London, where, being of a highly benevolent disposition, he accommodated young gentlemen whose parents were penurious—unjustly penurious of course—with such sums of money as their stations in life seemed likely to enable them to repay.

“But, my Lords, the usury laws, as your Lordships will doubtless recollect, being then in full operation, to the great detriment of heirs-at-law, Mr. Mainchance, feeling for the difficulties of the young, introduced an ingenious mode of evading them, whereby *some* article of *vertu*—generally a picture or something of that sort—was taken as half, or perhaps three-quarters of the loan, and having passed into the hands of the borrower was again returned to Mr. Mainchance at its real worth, a Carlo Dolce, or a Coal Pit, as your Lordships doubtless know, being capable of representing any given sum of money. This gentleman, my Lords, the Sheriff elect’s father, having at length paid the debt of nature—the only debt I believe that he was ever slow in discharging—the opulent gentleman who now stands at my side, and whom I have the honour of presenting to the Court, was enabled through one of those monetary transactions to claim the services of a distinguished politician now no more, and obtain that hereditary rank which he so greatly adorns. On becoming a baronet Sir Moses Mainchance withdrew from commercial pursuits, and set up for a gentleman, purchasing the magnificent estate of Pangburn Park, in Hit-im-and-Hold-im-shire, of which county he is a Deputy-Lieutenant, getting together an unrivalled pack of foxhounds—second to none as I am instructed—and hunting the country with great circumspection, and he requests me to add, he will be most proud and happy to see your Lordships to take a day with his hounds whenever it suits you, and also to dine with him this evening in the splendid Guildhall of the ancient and renowned City of London.”

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The foregoing outline, coupled with Sir Moses' treatment of the Major, will give the reader some idea of the character of the gentleman who now sought the society of our hero. In truth, if nature had not made him the meanest, Sir Moses would have been the most liberal of mankind, for his life was a continual struggle between the magnificence of his offers and the penury of his performances. He was perpetually forcing favours upon people, and then backing out when he saw they were going to be accepted. It required no little face to encounter the victim of such a recent "do" as the Major's, but Sir Moses was not to be foiled when he had an object in view. Telling his groom to stay at the door, and asking in a stentorian voice if Mr. Pringle is at home, so that there may be no mistake as to whom he is calling upon, the Baronet is now ushered into the drawing-room, where the dandified Billy sits in all the dangerous proximity of three pretty girls without their Mamma.

Mrs. Yammerton knew when to be out. "Good morning, young ladies!" exclaims Sir Moses gaily, greeting them all round—"Mr. Pringle," continued he, turning to Billy, "allow me to introduce myself—I believe I have the pleasure of addressing a nephew of my excellent old friend Sir Jonathan way to your amusement while in this neighbourhood. Tell Pringle, and I shall be most happy if I can contribute in any me now," continued he, without waiting for Billy's admission or rejection of kindred with Sir Jonathan, "tell me, now, when you are not engaged in this delightful way," smiling round on the beauties, "would you like to come and have a day with my hounds?"

Billy shuddered at the very thought, but quickly recovering his equanimity, he replied, "Yarse, he should like it very much."

"Oh, Mr. Pringle's a mighty hunter!" exclaimed Miss Yammerton, who really thought he was.—"Very good!" exclaimed Sir Moses, "very good! Then I'll tell you what we'll do. We meet on Monday at the Crooked Billet on the Bushmead Road—Tuesday at Stubbington Hill—Thursday, Woolerton, by Heckfield—Saturday, the Kennels. S'pose now

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you come to me on Sunday, I would have said Saturday, only I'm engaged to dine with Lord Oilcake, but you wouldn't mind coming over on a Sunday, I daresay, would you?" and without waiting for an answer he went on to say, "Come on Sunday, I'll send my dogcart for you, the thing I have at the door, we'll then hunt Monday and Tuesday, dine at the Club at Hinton on Wednesday, where we always have a capital dinner, and a party of excellent fellows, good singing, and all sorts of fun, and take Thursday at Woolerton, in your way home—draw Shawley Moss, the Withy beds at Langton, Tangleton Brake, and so on, but sure to find before we get to the Brake, for there were swarms of foxes on the moss the last time we were there, and capital good ones they are. Dom'd if they aren't.

"So now I think you couldn't be better suited; the same horse you ride Monday will come out on Thursday, and I'll have a two-stalled stable ready for you on Sunday, so that's a bargain—ay, young ladies, isn't it?" appealing to our fair friends. And now Fine Billy, who had been anxiously waiting to get a word in sideways while all this dread enjoyment was paraded, proceeded to make a vigorous effort to deliver himself from it. He was very much obliged to this unknown friend of his unknown uncle, Sir Jonathan, but he had only one horse, and was afraid he must decline. "Only one horse!" exclaimed Sir Moses, "only one horse!" who had heard he had ten, "ah, well, never mind," thinking he would sell him one. "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll mount you on the Tuesday—I'll mount you on the Tuesday—dom'd if I won't—and that'll make it all right—and that'll make it all right." So extending his hand he said, "Come on Sunday then, come on Sunday," and, bowing round to the ladies, he backed out of the room lest his friend the Major might appear and open his grievance about the horse. Billy then accompanied him to the door, where Sir Moses, pointing to the gaudy vehicle, said, "Ah, there's the dogcart you see, there's the dogcart, much at your service, much at your service," adding, as he placed his foot upon the step to ascend, "Our friend the Major here I make



"AH! THERE'S THE DOGCART, YOU SEE."

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no doubt will lend you a horse to put in it, and between ourselves," concluded he in a lower tone, "you may as well try if you can't get him to lend you a second horse to bring with you." So saying, Sir Moses again shook hands most fervently with his young friend, the nephew of Sir Jonathan, and mounting the vehicle, soused down in his seat and drove off with the air of a Jew bailiff in his Sunday best.

Of course, when Billy returned to the drawing-room the young ladies were busy discussing the Baronet, aided by Mamma, who had gone upstairs on the sound of wheels to reconnoitre her person, and was disappointed on coming down to find she had had her trouble for nothing.

If Sir Moses had been a married man instead of a widower without incumbrance, as the saying is, Fine Billy would have been more likely to have heard the truth respecting him, than he was as matters stood. As it was, the ladies had always run Sir Moses up, and did not depart from that course on the present occasion. Mrs. Yammerton, indeed, always said that he looked a great deal older than he really was, and had no objection to his being talked of for one of her daughters, and as courtships generally go by contraries, the fair lady of the glove with her light sunny hair, and lambent blue eyes, rather admired Sir Moses' hook-nose and clear olive complexion than otherwise. His jewelry, too, had always delighted her, for he had a stock equal to that of any retired pawnbroker. So they impressed Billy very favourably with the Baronet's pretensions, far more favourably the reader may be sure than the Recorder did the Barons of the Court of Exchequer.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE HIT-IM AND HOLD-IM SHIRE HOUNDS.



DESCENDING Long Benningborough Hill on the approach from the west, the reader enters the rich vale of Hit-im and Hold-im shire, rich in agricultural productions, lavish of rural beauties, and renowned for the strength and speed of its foxes.

As a hunting country Hit-im and Hold-im shire ranks next to Featherbedfordshire, and has always been hunted by men of wealth and renown. The great Mr. Bruiser hunted it at one time, and was succeeded by the equally great Mr. Customer, who kept it for upwards of twenty years. He was succeeded by Mr. Charles Crasher, after whom came the eminent Lord Martingal, who most materially improved its even then almost perfect features by the judicious planting of gorse covers on the eastern or Droxmoor side, where woodlands are deficient.

It was during Lord Martingal's reign that Hit-im and Hold-im shire may be said to have attained the zenith of its fame, for he was liberal in the extreme, not receiving a farthing subscription, and maintaining the club at the Fox and Hounds Hotel at Hinton with the greatest spirit and popularity. He reigned over Hit-im and Hold-im shire for the period of a quarter of a century, his retirement being at length caused by a fall from his horse, aggravated by distress at seeing his favourite gorses Rattleford and Chivington cut up by a branch line of the Crumpletin railway.

On his Lordship's resignation, the country underwent the degradation of passing into the hands of the well-known

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Captain Flasher, a gentleman who, instead of keeping hounds, as Lord Martingal had done, expected the hounds to keep him. To this end he organised a subscription—a difficult thing to realise even when men have got into the habit of paying, or perhaps promising one—but most difficult when, as in this case, they had long been accustomed to have their hunting for nothing. It is then that the beauties of a free pack are apparent. The Captain, however, nothing daunted by the difficulty, applied the screw most assiduously, causing many gentlemen to find out that they were just going to give up hunting, and others that they must go abroad to economise. This was just about the gloomy time that our friend the Major was vacillating between Boulogne and Bastille; and it so happened that Mr. Plantagenet Brown, of Pangburn Park, whose Norman-conquest family had long been pressing on the vitals of the estate, taking all out and putting nothing in, suddenly found themselves at the end of their tether. The estate had collapsed. Then came the brief summing-up of a long career of improvidence in the shape of an auctioneer's advertisement, offering the highly valuable freehold property, comprising about two thousand five hundred acres in a ring fence, with a modern mansion replete with every requisite for a nobleman or gentleman's seat, for sale, which, of course, brought the usual train of visitors, valuers, Paul-Pryers, and so on—some lamenting the setting, others speculating on the rising, sun.

At the sale, a most repulsive, poverty-stricken looking little old Jew kept protracting the biddings when everybody else seemed done, in such a way as to cause the auctioneer to request an *imparlance*, in order that he might ascertain who his principal was; when the Jew, putting his dirty hands to his bearded mouth, whispered in the auctioneer's ear, "Shir Moshes Mainchance," whereupon the languid biddings were resumed, and the estate was ultimately knocked down to the Baronet.

Then came the ceremony of taking possession—the carriage-and-four, the flags, the band of music, the triumphal arch, the

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fervid address and heartfelt reply, amid the prolonged cheers of the wretched pauperised tenantry.

That mark of respect over, let us return to the hounds.

Captain Flasher did not give satisfaction, which indeed was not to be expected, considering that he wanted a subscription. No man would have given satisfaction under the circumstances, but the Captain least of all, because he brought nothing to the common stock, nothing, at least, except his impudence, of which the members of the hunt had already a sufficient supply of their own. The country was therefore declared vacant at the end of the Captain's second season, the Guarantee Committee thinking it best to buy him off the third one, for which he had contracted to hunt it. This was just about the time that Sir Moses purchased Pangburn Park, and, of course, the country was offered to him. A passion for hunting is variously distributed, and Sir Moses had his share of it. He was more than a mere follower of hounds, for he took a pleasure in their working and management, and not knowing much about the cost, he jumped at the offer, declaring he didn't want a farthing subscription, no, not a farthing. He wouldn't even have a cover fund—no, not even a cover fund! He'd pay keepers, stoppers, damage, everything himself—dom'd if he wouldn't. Then when he got possession of the country, he declared that he found it absolutely indispensable for the promotion of sport, and the good of them all, that there should be a putting together of purses—every man ought to have a direct interest in the preservation of foxes, and, therefore, they should all pay five guineas—just five guineas a year to a cover fund. It wasn't fair that he should pay all the cost—dom'd if it was. He wouldn't stand it—dom'd if he would.

Then the next season he declared that five guineas was all moonshine—it would do nothing in the way of keeping such a country as Hit-im and Hold-im shire together—it must be ten guineas, and that would leave a great balance for him to pay. Well, ten guineas he got, and emboldened by his success, at the commencement of the next season he got a grand gathering together, at a hand-in-the-pocket hunt dinner at the Fox and

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Hounds Hotel at Hinton, to which he presented a case of champagne, when his health being drunk with suitable enthusiasm, he got up and made them a most elaborate speech on the pleasures and advantages of fox-hunting, which he declared was like meat, drink, washing and lodging to him, and to which he mainly attributed the very excellent health which they had just been good enough to wish him a continuance of in such complimentary terms, that he was almost overpowered by it. He was glad to see that he was not a monopoliser of the inestimable blessings of health, for, looking round the table, he thought he never saw such an assemblage of cheerful contented countenances—(applause)—and it was a great satisfaction to him to think that he in any way contributed to make them so—(renewed applause). He had been thinking since he came into the room whether it was possible to increase in any way the general stock of prosperity—(great applause)—and considering the success that had already marked his humble endeavours, he really thought that there was nothing like sticking to the same medicine, and, if possible, increasing the dose; for—(the conclusion of this sentence was lost in the general applause that followed). Having taken an inspiriting sip of wine, he thus resumed, “He now hunted the country three days a week,” he said, “and, thanks to their generous exertions, and the very judicious arrangement they had spontaneously made of having a hunt club, he really thought it would stand four days.”—(Thunders of applause followed this announcement, causing the glasses and biscuits to dance jigs on the table. Sir Moses took a prolonged sip of wine, and silence being at length again restored, he thus resumed):—“It had always stood four in old Martingal’s time, and why shouldn’t it do so in theirs?—(applause.) Look at its extent! Look at its splendid gorses! Look at its magnificent woodlands! He really thought it was second to none!” And so the company seemed to think too by the cheering that followed the announcement.

“Well then,” said Sir Moses, drawing breath for the grand effort, “there was only one thing to be considered—one *leetle*

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difficulty to be overcome—but one, which after the experience he had had of their gameness and liberality, he was sure they would easily surmount.”—(A murmur of “O-O-O’s,” with Hookey Walkers, and fingers to the nose, gradually following the speaker.)

“That *leetle* difficulty, he need hardly say, was their old familiar friend £ s. d. ! who required occasionally to be looked in the face.”—(Ironical laughter, with *sotto voce* exclamations from Jack to Tom and from Sam to Harry, of—“I say, *three* days are *quite* enough—*quite* enough. Don’t you think so?” With answers of “Plenty! plenty!” mingled with whispers of, “I say, this is what he calls hunting the country for nothing!”)

“Well, gentlemen,” continued Sir Moses, tapping the table with his presidential hammer, to assert his monopoly of noise, “Well, gentlemen, as I said before, I have no doubt we can overcome any difficulty in the matter of money—what’s the use of money if it’s not to enjoy ourselves, and what enjoyment is there equal to fox-hunting? (applause). None! none!” exclaimed Sir Moses with emphasis.

“Well then, gentlemen, what I was going to say was this: It occurred to me this morning as I was shaving myself——”

“That you would shave us,” muttered Mr. Paul Straddler to Hicks, the flying hatter, neither of whom ever subscribed.

“—It occurred to me this morning, as I was shaving myself, that for a very little additional outlay—say four hundred a year—and what’s four hundred a year among so many of us?—we might have four days a week, which is a great deal better than three in many respects, inasmuch as you have two distinct lots of hounds, accustomed to hunt together, instead of a jumble for one day, and both men and horses are in steadier and more regular work; and as to foxes, I needn’t say we have plenty of them, and that they will be all the better for a little more exercise.—(Applause from Sir Moses’ men, Mr. Smoothley and others.) Well, then, say four hundred a year, or, as hay and corn are dear and likely to continue so, suppose we put it at the worst, and call it five—five hundred—what’s five hundred

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a year to a great prosperous agricultural and commercial country like this? Nothing! A positive bagatelle! I'd be ashamed to have it known at the 'Corner' that we had ever haggled about such a sum."

"You pay it then," muttered Mr. Straddler.

"Catch him doing that," growled Hicks.

Sir Moses here took another sip of sherry, and thus resumed:—

"Well, now, gentlemen, as I said before, it only occurred to me this morning as I was shaving, or I would have been better prepared with some definite proposal for your consideration, but I've just dotted down here, on the back of one of Grove the fishmonger's cards (producing one from his waistcoat pocket as he spoke), the names of those who I think ought to be called upon to contribute; and, waiter!" exclaimed he, addressing one of the lanky-haired order, who had just protruded his head in at the door to see what all the eloquence was about, "if you'll give me one of those mutton fats,—and your master ought to be kicked for putting such things on the table, and you may tell him I said so,—I'll just read the names over to you," Sir Moses adjusting his gold double eye-glasses on his hooked nose as the waiter obeyed his commands.

"Well, now," said the Baronet, beginning at the top of the list, "I've put young Lord Polkaton down for fifty."

"But my lord doesn't hunt, Sir Moses!" ejaculated Mr. Mossman, his lordship's land-agent, alarmed at the demand upon a very delicate purse.

"Doesn't hunt!" retorted Sir Moses angrily. "No; but he might if he liked! If there were no hounds, how the deuce could he? It would do him far more good, let me tell him, than dancing at casinos and running after ballet girls, as he does. I've put him down for fifty, however," continued Sir Moses, with a jerk of his head, "and you may tell him I've done so."

"Wish you may get it," growled Mr. Mossman with disgust.

"Well, then," said the Baronet, proceeding to the next name on the list, "comes old Lord Harpsichord. He's good

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for fifty, too, I should say. At all events, I've put him down for that sum ;" adding, "I've no notion of those great landed cormorants cutting away to the continent and shirking the obligations of country life. I hold it to be the duty of every man to subscribe to a pack of fox-hounds. In fact, I would make a subscription a first charge upon land, before poor-rate, highway-rate, or any sort of rate. I'd make it payable before the assessed taxes themselves"—(laughter and applause, very few of the company being landowners). "Two fifties is a hundred, then," observed Sir Moses, perking up ; "and if we can screw another fifty out of old Lady Shortwhist, so much the better ; at all events, I think she'll be good for a pony ; and then we come to the Baronets. First and foremost is that confounded prosy old ass, Sir George Persiflage, with his empty compliments and his fine cravats. I've put him down for fifty, though I don't suppose the old sinner will pay it, though we may, perhaps, get half, which we shouldn't do if we were not to ask for more. Well, we'll call the supercilious old owls five-and-twenty for safety," added Sir Moses. "Then there's Sir Morgan Wildair ; I should think we may say five-and-twenty for him. What say you, Mr. Squeezely ?" appealing to Sir Morgan's agent at the low end of the table.

"I've no instructions from Sir Morgan on the subject, Sir Moses," replied Mr. Squeezely, shaking his head.

"Oh, but he's a young man, and you must tell him that it's right—*necessary*, in fact," replied Sir Moses. "You just pay it, and pass it through his accounts—that's the shortest way. It's the duty of an agent to save his principal trouble. I wouldn't keep an agent who bothered me with all the twopenny-halfpenny transactions of the estate—dom'd if I would," said Sir Moses, resuming his eye-glass reading.

He then went on through the names of several other parties who he thought might be coaxed or bullied out of subscriptions, he taking this man, another taking that, and working them, as he said, on the fair means first, and foul means principle afterwards.

"Well, then, now you see, gentlemen," said Sir Moses,

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pocketing his card and taking another sip of sherry prior to summing up; "it just amounts to this. Four days a week, as I said before, is a dom'd deal better than three, and if we can get the fourth day out of these shabby screws, why so much the better; but if that can't be done entirely, it can to a certain extent, and then it will only remain for the members of the club and the strangers—by the way, we shouldn't forget them—it will only remain for the members of the club and the strangers to raise any slight deficiency by an increased subscription, and according to my plan of each man working his neighbour, whether the club subscription was to be increased to fifteen, or seventeen, or even to twenty pounds a year will depend entirely upon ourselves; so you see, gentlemen, we have all a direct interest in the matter, and cannot go to work too earnestly or too strenuously; for believe me, gentlemen, there's nothing like hunting, it promotes health and longevity, wards off the gout and sciatica, and keeps one out of the hands of those dom'd doctors, with their confounded bills—no offence to our friend Plaister, there," alluding to a doctor of that name who was sitting about half-way down the table—"so now," continued Sir Moses, "I think I cannot do better than conclude by proposing as a bumper toast, with all the honours, Long life and prosperity to the Hit-im and Hold-im shire hounds!"

When the forced cheering had subsided, our friend—or rather Major Yammerton's friend—Mr. Smoothley, the gentleman who assisted at the sale of Bo-peep, rose to address the meeting amid coughs and knocks and the shuffling of feet. Mr. Smoothley coughed too, for he felt he had an uphill part to perform; but Sir Moses was a hard task-master, and held his "I. O. U.'s" for a hundred and fifty-seven pounds. On silence being restored, Mr. Smoothley briefly glanced at the topics urged, as he said, in such a masterly manner by their excellent and popular master, to whom they all owed a deep debt of gratitude for the spirited manner in which he hunted the country, rescuing it from the degradation to which it had fallen, and restoring it to its pristine fame and prosperity—

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(applause from Sir Moses and his *claqueurs*). With respect to the specific proposal submitted by Sir Moses, Mr. Smoothley proceeded to say, he really thought there could not be a difference of opinion on the subject—(renewed applause, with murmurs of dissent here and there). It was clearly their interest to have the country hunted four days a week, and the mode in which Sir Moses proposed accomplishing the object was worthy the talents of the greatest financier of the day—(applause)—for it placed the load on the shoulders of those who were the best able to bear it—(applause). Taking all the circumstances of the case, therefore, into consideration, he thought the very least they could do would be to pass a unanimous vote of thanks to their excellent friend for the brilliant sport he had hitherto shown them, and pledge themselves to aid to the utmost of their power in carrying out his most liberal and judicious proposal.

“Jewish enough,” whispered Mr. Straddler into the flying hatter’s ear.

And the following week’s Hit-im and Hold-im shire Herald, and also the Featherbedfordshire Gazette, contained a string of resolutions, embodying the foregoing, as unanimously passed at a full meeting of the members of the Hit-im and Hold-im shire Hunt, held at the Fox and Hounds Hotel, in Hinton, Sir Moses Mainchance, Bart., in the chair.

And each man set to work on the pocket of his neighbour with an earnestness inspired by the idea of saving his own. The result was that a very considerable sum was raised for the four days a week, which, somehow or other, the country rarely or ever got, except in the shape of advertisements ; for Sir Moses always had some excuse or other for shirking it—either his huntsman had got drunk the day before, or his first whip had had a bad fall, or his second whip had been summoned to the small debts court, or his hounds had been fighting and several of them had got lamed, or the distemper had broken out in his stable, or something or other had happened to prevent him.

Towards Christmas, or on the eve of an evident frost, he

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came valiantly out, and if foiled by a sudden thaw, would indulge in all sorts of sham draws, and short days, to the great disgust of those who were not in the secret. Altogether Sir Moses Mainchance rode Hit-im and Hold-im shire as Hit-im and Hold-im shire had never been ridden before.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE PANGBURN PARK ESTATE.



HE first thing that struck Sir Moses Mainchance after he became a "laird" was that he got very little interest for his money. Here was he who had always looked down with scorn upon anything that would not pay ten per cent., scarcely netting three by his acres. He couldn't understand it—dom'd if he could. How could people live who had nothing but land? Certainly Mr. Plantagenet Smith had left the estate in as forlorn a condition as could well be imagined. Latterly his agent, Mr. Tom Teaser, had directed his attention solely to the extraction of rent, regardless of maintenance, to say nothing of improvements, consequently, the farm buildings were dilapidated, and the land impoverished in every shape and way. Old pasture-field after old pasture-field had gradually succumbed to the plough, and the last ounce of freshness being extracted, the fields were left to lay themselves down to weeds or anything they liked. As this sort of work never has but one ending, the time soon arrived when the rent was not raiseable. Indeed, it was the inability to make "both ends meet," as Paul Pry used to say, which caused Mr. Plantagenet Smith to retire from Burke's landed gentry, which he did to his own advantage, land being sometimes like family plate, valuable to sell, but unprofitable to keep.

Sir Moses, flushed with his reception and the consequence he had acquired, met his tenants gallantly the first rent-day, expecting to find everything as smooth and pleasant as a

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London house-rent audit. Great was his surprise and disgust at the pauperised wretches he encountered, creatures that really appeared to be but little raised above the brute creation, were it not for the uncommon keenness they showed at a "catch." First came our old friend Henerey Brown & Co., who, foiled in their attempt to establish themselves on Major Yammerton's farm at Bonnyrigs, and also upon several other farms in different parts of the county, had at length "wheas we have considered" Mr. Teaser to some better purpose for one on the Pangburn Park Estate.

This was Doblinton Farm, consisting of a hundred and sixty of undrained obdurate clay, as sticky as bird-lime in wet, and as hard as iron in dry weather, and therefore requiring extra strength to take advantage of a favourable season. Now Henerey Brown & Co. had farmed, or rather starved, a light sandy soil of some two-thirds the extent of Doblinton, and their half-fed pony horses and wretched implements were quite unable to cope with the intractable stubborn stuff they had selected. Perhaps we can hardly say they selected it, for it was a case of Hobson's choice with them, and as they offered more rent than the outgoing tenant, who had farmed himself to the door, had paid, Mr. Teaser installed them in it.

And now at the end of the year (the farms being let on that beggarly pauper encouraging system of a running half year) Henerey & Humphrey came dragging their legs to the Park with a quarter of a year's rent between them, Henerey who was the orator undertaking to appear, Humphrey paying his respects only to the cheer. Sir Moses and Mr. Teaser were sitting in state in the side entrance hall, surrounded by the usual paraphernalia of pens, ink, and paper, when Henerey's short, square, turnip-headed, vacant-countenanced figure loomed in the distance. Mr. Teaser trembled when he saw him, for he knew that the increased rent obtained for Henerey's farm had been much dwelt upon by the auctioneer, and insisted upon by the vendor as conducive evidence of the improving nature of the whole estate. Teaser, like the schoolboy in the poem, now traced the day's disaster in Henerey's morning

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face. However, Teaser put a good face on the matter, saying, as Henerey came diverging up to the table, "This is Mr. Brown, Sir Moses, the new tenant of Doblington—the farm on the hill." He was going to add, "with the bad out-buildings," but he thought he had better keep that to himself. *Humph* sniffed the eager baronet, looking the new tenant over.

"Your sarvent, Sir Moses," ducked the farmer, seating himself in the dread cash-extracting chair.

"Well, my man, and how d'ye do? I hope you're well—How's your wife? I hope she's well," continued the Baronet, watching Henerey's protracted dive into his corduroy breeches-pocket, and his fish up of the dirty canvas money-bag. Having deliberately untied the string, Henerey, without noticing the Baronet's polite inquiries, shook out a few local five pound notes, along with some sovereigns, shillings, and sixpence upon the table, and heaving a deep sigh, pushed them over towards Mr. Teaser. That worthy having wetted his thumb at his mouth proceeded to count the dirty old notes, and finding them as he expected, even with the aid of the change, very short of the right amount, he asked Henerey if he had any bills against them?

"W-h-o-y no-a ar think not," replied Henerey, scratching his straggling-haired head, apparently conning the matter over in his mind. "W-h-o-y, yeas, there's the Income Tax, and there's the lime to 'loo off."

"Lime!" exclaimed the Baronet. "What have I to do with lime?"

"W-h-o-y, yeas, you know you promised to 'loo the lime," replied Henerey, appealing to Mr. Teaser, who frowned and bit his lip at the over-true assertion.

"Never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Sir Moses, seeing through the deceit at a glance. "Never heard of such a thing," repeated he. "That's the way you keep up your rents is it?" asked he: "Deceive yourselves by pretending to get more money than you do, and pay rates and taxes upon your deceit as a punishment. That 'ill not do! dom'd if it will," continued the Baronet, waxing warm.

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"Well, but the income tax won't bring your money up to anything like the right amount," observed Mr. Teaser to Henerey, anxious to get rid of the lime question.

"W-h-o-y no-a," replied Henerey, again scratching his pate, "but it's as much as I can bring ye to-day."

"To-day, man!" retorted Sir Moses. "Why, don't you know that this is the rent-day! the day on which the entire monetary transactions on the whole estate are expected to be settled."

Henerey—"O, w-h-o-y it 'ill make ne odds to ye, Sir Moses."

Sir Moses—"Ne odds to me! How do you know that?"

Henerey—(apologetically) "Oh, Sir Moses, you have plenty, Sir Moses."

Sir Moses—"Me plenty! me plenty! I'm the poorest crittur alive!" which was true enough, only not in the sense Sir Moses intended it.

Henerey—"Why, why, Sir Moses, ar'll bring ye some more after a bit; but ar tell ye," appealing to Teaser, "*Ye mun 'loo for the lime.*"

"The lime be hanged," exclaimed Sir Moses. "D'ye s'pose I'm such a fool as to let you the land, and farm ye the land, and pay income tax on rent that I never receive? That won't do, dom'd if it will."

Henerey—(boiling up) "Well, but, Sir Moses, wor farm's far o'er dear."

Sir Moses (turning flesh-colour with fury) "O'er dear! Why, isn't it the rent you yourself offered for it?"

Henerey—"Why, why, but we hadn't looked her carefully over."

"Bigger fool you," ejaculated the Jew.

"The land's far worse nor we took it for—some of the plough's a shem to be seen—wor stable rains in desprate—there isn't a dry place for a coo—the back wall of the barn's all bulgin oot—the pigs get into wor garden for want of a gate—there isn't a fence 'ill turn a foal—the hars eat all wor tormots—we're perfectly ruined wi' rats," and altogether Henerey opened such a battery of grievances as completely

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drove Sir Moses, who hated any one to talk but himself, from his seat, and made him leave the finish of his friend to Mr. Teaser.

As the Baronet went swinging out of the room he mentally exclaimed, "Never saw such a man as that in my life—dom'd if ever I did!"

Mr. Teaser then proceeded with the wretched audit, each succeeding tenant being a repetition of the first—excuses—drawbacks—allowances for lime—money no matter to Sir Moses—and this with a whole year's rent due, to say nothing of hopeless arrears.

"How the deuce," as Sir Moses asked, "do people live who have nothing but land?"

When Sir Moses returned, at the end of an hour or so, he found one of the old tenants of the estate, Jacky Hindmarch, in the chair. Jacky was one of the real scratching order of farmers, and ought to be preserved at Madame Tussaud's or the British Museum, for the information of future ages. To see him in the fields, with his crownless hat and tattered clothes, he was more like a scarecrow than a farmer; though, thanks to the influence of cheap finery, he turned out very shiny and satiney on a Sunday. Jacky had seventy acres of land—fifty acres of arable and twenty acres of grass, which latter he complimented with an annual mowing without giving it any manure in return, thus robbing his pastures to feed his fallows—if, indeed, he did not rob both by selling the manure off his farm altogether. Still Jacky was reckoned a cute fellow among his compatriots. He had graduated in the Insolvent Debtors' Court to evade his former landlord's claims, and emerged from gaol with a good stock of bad law engrafted on his innate knavery. In addition to this, Jacky, when a hind, had nearly had to hold up his hand at Quarter Sessions for stealing his master's corn, which he effected in a very ingenious way:—The granary being above Jacky's stable, he bored a hole through the floor, to which he affixed a stocking; and, having drawn as much corn as he required, he stopped the hole up with a plug until he wanted a fresh supply. The farmer—one Mr. Podmore

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—at length smelt a rat ; but giving Jacky in charge rather prematurely, he failed in substantiating the accusation, when the latter, acting “under advice,” brought an action against Podmore, which ended in a compromise, Podmore having to pay Jacky twenty pounds for robbing him ! This money, coupled with the savings of a virtuous young woman he presently espoused, and who had made free with the produce of her master’s dairy, enabled Jacky to take the farm off which he passed through the Insolvent Debtors’ Court, on to the Pangburn Park estate, where he was generally known by the name of Lawyer Hindmarch.

Jacky and his excellent wife attempted to farm the whole seventy acres themselves ; to plough, harrow, clean, sow, reap, mow, milk, churn—do everything, in fact ; consequently they were always well in arrear with their work, and had many a fine run after the seasons. If Jacky got his turnips in by the time other people were singling theirs, he was thought to do extremely well. To see him raising the seed furrow in the autumn, a stranger would think he was ploughing in a green crop for manure, so luxuriant were the weeds. But Jacky Hindmarch would defend his system against Mr. Mechi himself ; there being no creature so obstinate or intractable as a pig-headed farmer. A landlord had better let his land to a cheesemonger, a greengrocer, a draper, anybody with energy and capital, rather than to one of these self-sufficient, dawdling nincompoops. To be sure, Jacky farmed as if each year was to be his last, but he wouldn’t have been a bit better if he had had a one-and-twenty years’ lease before him. “Take all out and put nothing in,” was his motto. This was the genius who was shuffling, and haggling, and prevaricating with Mr. Teaser when Sir Moses returned, and who now gladly skulked off ; Henerey Brown not having reported very favourably of the great man’s temper.

The next to come was a woman—a great mountainous woman—one Mrs. Peggy Turnbull, wife of little Billy Turnbull of Lowfield Farm, who, she politely said, was not fit to be trusted from home by hisself. Mrs. Turnbull was, though,

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being quite a match for any man in the country, either with her tongue or her fists. She was a great masculine knock-me-down woman, round as a sugar-barrel, with a most extravagant stomach, wholly absorbing her neck, and reaching quite up to her chin. Above the barrel was a round, swarthy, sun-burnt face, lit up with a pair of keen little twinkling beady black eyes. She paused in her roll as she neared the chair, at which she now cast a contemptuous look, as much as to say, "How can I ever get into such a thing as that?"

Mr. Teaser saw her dilemma and kindly gave her the roomier one on which he was sitting—while Sir Moses inwardly prepared a little dose of politeness for her.

"Well, my good woman," said he, as soon as she got soused on to the seat, "Well, my good woman, how d'ye do? I hope you're well. How's your husband? I hope he's well;" and was proceeding in a similar strain when the monster interrupted his dialogue by thumping the table with her fist, and exclaiming at the top of her voice, as she fixed her little beady black eyes full upon him—

"D'YE THINK WE'RE GANNIN TO GET A NEW B-A-R-R-U-N?"

"Dom you and your b-a-r-r-n!" exclaimed the Baronet, boiling up. "Why don't you leave those things to your husband?"

"HE'S SEE SHY!" roared the monster.

"You're not shy, however!" replied Sir Moses, again jumping up and running away.

And thus what with one and another of them, Sir Moses was so put out that dearly as he loved a let off for his tongue, he couldn't bring himself to face his friends again at dinner. So the agreeable duty devolved upon Mr. Teaser, of taking the chair, and proposing in a bumper toast, with all the honours and one cheer more, the health of a landlord who, it was clear, meant to extract the uttermost farthing he could from his tenants.

And that day's proceedings furnished ample scope for a beginning, for there was not one tenant on the estate who paid up; and Sir Moses declared that of all the absurdities he had ever heard tell of in the whole course of his life, that of



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paying income tax on money he didn't receive was the greatest. "Dom'd if it wasn't!" said he.

In fact the estate had come to a stand-still, and wanted nursing instead of further exhaustion. If it had got into the hands of an improving owner—a Major Yammerton, for instance—there was redemption enough in the land, these scratching fellows only exhausting the surface; and draining and subsoiling would soon have put matters right, but Sir Moses declared he wouldn't throw good money after bad, that the rushes were meant to be there and there they should stay. If the tenants couldn't pay their rents how could they pay any drainage interest? he asked. Altogether Sir Moses declared it shouldn't be a case of over shoes, over boots, with him—that he wouldn't go deeper into the mud than he was, and he heartily wished he had the price of the estate back in his pocket again, as many a man has wished, and many a one will wish again—there being nothing so ticklish to deal with as land. There is no reason though why it should be so; but we will keep our generalities for another chapter.

Sir Moses' property went rapidly back, and soon became a sort of last refuge for the destitute, whither the ejected of all other estates congregated prior to scattering their stock, on failing to get farms in more favoured localities. As they never meant to pay, of course they all offered high rents, and then having got possession the Henerey Brown scene was enacted—the farm was "far o'er dear"—they could "make nout on't at that rent!" nor could they have made aught on them if they had had them for nothing, seeing that their capital consisted solely of their intense stupidity. Then if Sir Moses wouldn't reduce the rent, he might just do his "warst," meanwhile they pillaged the land both by day and by night. The cropping of course corresponded with the tenure, and may be described as just anything they could get off the land. White crop succeeded white crop, if the weeds didn't smother the seeds, or if any of the slovens did "try for a few turnips," as they called it, they were sown on dry spots selected here and there, with an

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implement resembling a dog's-meat man's wheelbarrow—drawn by one ass and steered by another.

Meanwhile Mr. Teaser's labours increased considerably, what with the constant lettings and leavings and watchings for "sloping." There was always some one or other of the worthies on the wing, and the more paper and words Mr. Teaser employed to bind them, the more inefficient and futile he found the attempt. It soon became a regular system to do the new landlord, in furtherance of which the tenants formed themselves into a sort of mutual aid association. Then when a seizure was effected, they combined not to buy, so that the sufferer got his wretched stock back at little or no loss.

Wretched, indeed, was the spectacle of a sale; worn out horses, innocent of corn; cows, on whose hips one could hang one's hat; implements that had been "fettled oop" and "fettled oop," until not a particle of the parent stock remained; carts and trappings that seemed ready for a bonfire; pigs, that looked as if they wanted food themselves instead of being likely to feed any one else; and poultry that all seemed troubled with the pip.

The very bailiff's followers were shocked at the emptiness of the larders. A shank bone of salt meat dangling from the ceiling, a few eggs on a shelf, a loaf of bread in a bowl, a pound of butter in a pie-dish—the whole thing looking as unlike the plentiful profusion of a farm-house as could well be imagined.

The arduous duties of the office, combined with the difficulty of pleasing Sir Moses, at length compelled Mr. Teaser to resign; when our "laird," considering the nature of the services required, concluded that there could be no one so fit to fulfil them as one of the "peoplish." Accordingly he went to town, and after consulting Levy this, and "Goodman" that, and Ephraim t'other, he at length fixed upon that promising swell, young Mr. Mordecai Nathan, of Cursitor Street, whose knowledge of the country consisted in having assisted in the provincial department of his father's catchpoll business in the glorious days of writs and sponging houses.

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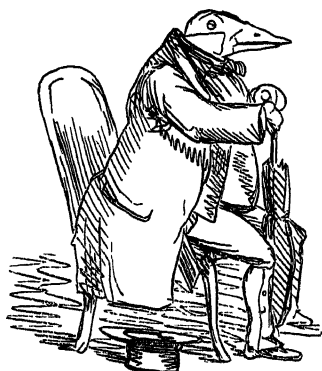
In due time down came Mordecai, ringed and brooched and chained and jewelled, and as Sir Moses was now the great man, hunting the country, associating with Lord Oilcake, and so on, he gave Mordecai a liberal salary, four hundred a year, made up in the following clerical way :—

	£	s.	d.
A furnished house	100	0	0
A garden	40	0	0
Coals found and led	60	0	0
Keep of a cow	40	0	0
Do. of a horse	50	0	0
Occasional use of a gig (this when following a fugitive)	10	0	0
Cash	100	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£400	0	0
	<hr/>		

Besides which, Sir Moses promised him ten per cent. upon all recovered arrears, which set Mordecai to work with all the enthusiastic energy of his race.

CHAPTER XLIV.

COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE



"It's a foine day."



NE of the most distinguishing features between commerce and agriculture undoubtedly is the marked indifference

shown to the value of time by the small followers of the latter, compared to the respectful treatment it receives at the hands of the members of the commercial world. To look at their relative movements one would think that the farmer was the man who carried

on his business under cover, instead of being the one who exposes all his capital to the weather. It is a rare thing to see a farmer—even in hay time—in a hurry. If the returns could be obtained we daresay it would be found that three-fourths of the people who are late for railway trains are farmers.

In these accelerated days, when even the very street waggon horses trot, they are the only beings whose pace has not been improved. The small farmer is just the same slowly moving dawdling creature that he was before the perfection of steam. Never punctual, never ready, never able to give a direct answer to a question; a pitchfork at their backs would fail to push some of these fellows into prosperity. They seem wholly lost

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to that emulative spirit which actuates the trader to endeavour to make each succeeding year leave him better than the last. A farmer will be forty years on a farm without having benefited himself, his family, his landlord, or any human being whatever. The last year's tenancy will find him as poor as the first, with, in all probability, his land a great deal poorer. In dealing, a small farmer is never happy without a haggle. Even if he gets his own price he reproaches himself when he returns home with not having asked a little more, and so got a wrangle. Very often, however, they outwit themselves entirely by asking so much more than a thing is really worth, that a man who knows what he is about, and has no hopes of being able to get the sun to stand still, declines entering upon an apparently endless negotiation.

See Lawyer Hindmarch coming up the High Street at Halterley fair, leading his great grey colt, with his landlord Sir Moses hailing him with his usual "Well, my man, how d'ye do? I hope you're well, how much for the colt?"

The lawyer's keen intellect—seeing that it is his landlord, with whom he is well over the left—springs a few pounds upon an already exorbitant price, and Sir Moses, who can as he says, "measure the horse out to ninepence," turns round on his heel with a chuck of his chin, as much as to say, "you may go on."

Then the lawyer relenting says, "W—h—o—y, but there'll be summut to return upon that, you know, Sir Moses, sir."

"I should think so," replies the Baronet, walking away, to "Well, my man—how d'ye do? I hope you're well," somebody else.

A sale by auction of agricultural stock illustrates our position still further, and one remarkable feature is that the smaller the sale the more unpunctual people are. They seldom get begun under a couple of hours after the advertised time, and then the dwelling, the coaxing, the wrangling, the "puttings-up" again, the ponderous attempts at wit are painful and oppressive to any one accustomed to the easy gliding celerity of town auctioneers. A conference with a farmer is worse especially if the party is

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indiscreet enough to let the farmer come to him instead of his going to the farmer.

The chances, then, are, that he is saddled with a sort of old man of the sea ; as a certain ambassador once was with a gowk of an Englishman, who gained an audience under a mistaken notion, and kept sitting and sitting long after his business was discussed, in spite of his Excellency's repeated bows and intimations that he might retire.

Gowk seemed quite insensible to a hint. In vain his Excellency stood bowing and bowing—hoping to see him rise. No such luck. At length his Excellency asked him if there was anything else he could do for him ?

“Why, no,” replied Gowk drily ; adding after a pause, “but you haven't asked me to dine.”

“Oh, I *beg* your pardon !” replied his Excellency, “I wasn't aware it was in my instructions, but I'll refer to them and see,” added he, backing out of the room.

Let us fancy old Heavyheels approaching his landlord, to ask if he thinks they are gannin to get a new barrun, or anything else he may happen to want, for these worthies have not discovered the use of the penny-post, and will trudge any distance to deliver their own messages. Having got rolled into the room, the first thing Heels does is to look out for a seat, upon which he squats like one of Major Yammerton's hares, and from which he is about as difficult to raise. Instead of coming out with his question as a trader would, “What's rum? what's sugar? what's indigo?” he fixes his unmeaning eyes on his landlord, and with a heavy aspiration, and propping his chin up with a baggy umbrella, ejaculates—“*N-o-o*,” just as if his landlord had sent for him instead of his having come of his own accord.

“Well !” says the landlord briskly, in hopes of getting him on.

“It's a foine day,” observes Heavyheels, as if he had nothing whatever on his mind, and so he goes maundering and sauntering on, wasting his own and his landlord's time, most likely ending with some such preposterous proposition as would

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stamp any man for a fool if it wasn't so decidedly in old Heavyheel's own favour.

To give them their due, they are never shy about asking, and have always a host of grievances to bait a landlord with who gives them an opportunity. Some of the women—we beg their pardon—ladies of the establishments, seem to think that a landlord rides out for the sake of being worried, and rush at him as he passes like a cur dog at a beggar.

Altogether they are a wonderful breed! It will hardly be credited hereafter, when the last of these grubbing old earthworms is extinct, that in this anxious, commercial, money-striving country, where every man is treading on his neighbour's heels for cash, that there should ever have been a race of men who required all the coaxing and urging and patting on the back to induce them to benefit themselves that these slugs of small tenant farmers have done. And the bulk of them not a bit better for it. They say "y-e-a-s," and go and do the reverse directly.

Fancy our friend Goodbeer, the brewer, assembling his tied Bonnifaces at a banquet consisting of all the delicacies of the season—beef, mutton, and cheese, as the sailor said—and after giving the usual loyal and patriotic toasts, introducing his calling in the urgent way some landlords do theirs—pointing out that the more swipes they sell the greater will be their profit, recommending them to water judiciously, keeping the capsicum out of sight, and, in lieu of some new implement of industry, telling them that a good, strong, salt Dutch cheese is found to be a great promoter of thirst, and recommending each man to try a cheese on himself—perhaps ending by bowling one at each of them by way of a start.

But some will, perhaps, say that the interests of the landlord and tenant-farmer are identical, and that you cannot injure the latter without hurting the former.

Not more identical, we submit, than the interests of Goodbeer with the Bonnifaces; the land is let upon a calculation what each acre will produce, just as Goodbeer lets a public-house on a calculation founded on its then consumption of malt

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liquor ; and whatever either party makes beyond that amount, either through the aid of guano, Dutch cheese, or what not, is the tenant's. The only difference we know between them is, that Goodbeer, being a trader, will have his money to the day ; while in course of time the too easy landlord's rent has become postponed to every other person's claim. It is, "O, it will make ne matter to you, Sir Moses," with too many of them.

Then, if that convenient view is acquiesced in, the party submitting is called a "good landlord" (which in too many instances means a great fool), until some other favour is refused, when the hundredth one denied obliterates the recollection of the ninety-nine conferred, and he sinks into a "rank bad 'un." The best landlord, we imagine, is he who lets his land on fair terms, and keeps his tenants well up to the mark both with their farming and their payments. At present the landlords are too often a sort of sleeping partners with their tenants, sharing with them the losses of the bad years without partaking with them in the advantages of the good ones.

"Ah, it's all dom'd well," we fancy we hear Sir Moses Mainchance exclaim, "saying 'keep them up to the mark,' but how d'ye do it ? how d'ye do it ? can you bind a weasel ? No man's tried harder than I have !"

We grant that it is difficult, but agriculture never had such opportunities as it has now. The thing is to get rid of the weasels, and with public companies framed for draining, building, doing everything that is required without that terrible investigation of title, no one is justified in keeping his property in an unproductive state. The fact is that no man of capital will live in a cottage, the thing therefore is to lay a certain number of these small holdings together, making one good farm of them all, with suitable buildings, and, as the saying is, let the weasels go to the wall. They will be far happier and more at home with spades or hoes in their hands, than in acting a part for which they have neither capital, courage, nor capacity. Fellows take a hundred acres who should only have five, and haven't the wit to find out that it is cheaper to buy manure than to rent land.

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This is not a question of crinoline or taste that might be advantageously left to Mrs. Pringle ; but is one that concerns the very food and well being of the people, and landlords ought not to require coaxing and patting on the back to induce them to partake of the cheese that the commercial world offers them. Even if they are indifferent about benefiting themselves they should not be regardless of the interests of their country. But there are very few people who cannot spend a little more money than they have. Let them “up then and at” the drainage companies, and see what wonders they’ll accomplish with their aid !

We really believe the productive powers of the country might be quadrupled.

CHAPTER XLV.

SIR MOSES' MÉNAGE.



Sir Moses' butler.

SIR MOSES, being now a magnate of the land, associating with Lord Oilcake, Lord Repartee, Sir Harry Fuzball, and other great dons, of course had to live up to the mark, an inconvenient arrangement for those who do not like paying for it, and the consequence was, that he had to put up with an inferior article—take first-class servants who had fallen into second-class circumstances. He had a ticket-of-leave butler, a *delirium tremens* footman, and our old friend Pheasant-feathers, now

calling herself Mrs. Margerum, for cook and housekeeper. And first, of the butler. He was indeed a magnificent man, standing six feet two, and faultlessly proportioned, with a commanding presence, of sufficient age to awe those under him, and to inspire confidence in an establishment with such a respectable looking man at the head. Though so majestic, he

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moved noiselessly, spoke in a whisper, and seemed to spirit the things off the table without sound or effort. Pity that the exigencies of gambling should have caused such an elegant man to melt his master's plate, still greater that he should have been found out and compelled to change the faultless white vest of upper service for the unbecoming costume of prison life. Yet so it was: and the man who was convicted as Henry Stopper, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation, emerged at the end of four, with a ticket-of-leave, under the assumed name of Demetrius Bankhead. Mr. Bankhead, knowing the sweets of office, again aspired to high places, but found great difficulty in suiting himself, indeed in getting into service at all.

People who keep fine gentlemen are very chary and scrupulous whom they select, and extremely inquisitive and searching in their inquiries.

In vain Mr. Bankhead asserted that he had been out of health and living on the Continent, or that he had been a partner in a brewery which hadn't succeeded, or that his last master was abroad he didn't know where, and made a variety of similar excuses.

Though many fine ladies and gentlemen were amazingly taken with him at first, and thought he would grace their sideboards uncommonly, they were afraid to touch for fear "all was not right."

Then those of a lower grade, thought he wouldn't apply to them after having lived in such high places as he described, and this notwithstanding Bankhead's plausible assertion, that he wished for a situation in a quiet regular family in the country, where he could get to bed at a reasonable hour, instead of being kept up till he didn't know when. He would even come upon trial, if the parties liked, which would obviate all inquiries about character; just as if a man couldn't run off with the plate the first day as well as the last.

Our readers, we daresay, know the condescending sort of gentlemen "who will accept of their situations," and who deprecate an appeal to their late masters by saying in an airified sort of

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way, with a toss of the head or a wave of the hand, that they told his Grace or Sir George they wouldn't trouble to ask them for characters. Just as if the Duke or Sir George were infinitely beneath their notice or consideration.

And again, the sort of men who flourish a bunch of testimonials, skilfully selecting the imposing passages and evading the want of that connecting link upon which the whole character depends, and who talk in a patronising way of "poor Lord this," or "poor Sir Thomas that," and what they would have done for them if they had been alive, poor men !

Mr. Demetrius Bankhead tried all the tricks of the trade—we beg pardon—profession—wherever he heard of a chance, until hope deferred almost made his noble heart sick. The "puts off" and excuses he got were curiously ingenious. However, he was pretty adroit himself, for when he saw the parties were not likely to bite he anticipated a refusal by respectfully declining the situation, and then saying that he might have had so-and-so's place, only he wanted one where he should be in town half the year, or that he couldn't do with only one footman under him.

It was under stress of circumstances that Sir Moses Mainchance became possessed of Mr. Bankhead's services. He had kicked his last butler (one of the fine characterless sort) out of the house for coming in drunk to wait at dinner, and insisting upon putting on the cheese first with the soup, then with the meat, then with the sweets, and lastly with the dessert ; and as Sir Moses was going to give one of his large hunt dinners shortly after, it behoved him to fill up the place—we beg pardon—office—as quickly as possible. To this end he applied to Mrs. Listener, the gossiping Registry Office-keeper of Hinton, a woman well calculated to write the history of every family in the county, for behind her screen every particular was related, and Mrs. Listener, having paraded all the wretched glazey-clothed, misshapen creatures that always turn up on such occasions, Sir Moses was leaving after his last visit in disgust, when Mr. Bankhead walked in—"quite promiscuous," as the saying is, but by previous arrangement with Mrs.

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Listener. Sir Moses was struck with Bankhead's air and demeanour, so quiet, so respectful, raising his hat as he met Sir Moses at the door, that he jumped to the conclusion that he would do for him, and returning shortly after to Mrs. Listener, he asked all the usual questions, which Mrs. Listener cleverly evaded, merely saying that he professed to be a perfect butler, and had several most excellent testimonials, but that it would be much better for Sir Moses to judge for himself, for really Mrs. Listener had the comfort of Sir Moses so truly at heart that she could not think of recommending any one with whom she was not perfectly conversant, and altogether she palavered him so neatly, always taking care to extol Bankhead's personal appearance as evidence of his respectability, that the Baronet was fairly talked into him, almost without his knowing it, while Mrs. Listener salved her own conscience with the reflection that it was Sir Moses' own doing, and that the bulk of his plate was "Brummagem" ware—and not silver. So the oft-disappointed ticket-of-leaver was again installed in a butler's pantry.

And having now introduced him, we will pass over the *delirium tremens* footman and arrive at the next important personage in an establishment, the housekeeper, in this case our old friend Pheasant's-fathers. Mrs. Margerum, late Sarey Grimes, the early coach companion and confidante of our fair friend Mrs. Pringle—had undergone the world's "ungenerous scorn," as well for having set up an adopted son, as for having been turned away from many places for various domestic peculations. Mrs. Margerum, however, was too good a judge to play upon anything that anybody could identify, consequently though she was often caught, she always had an answer, and would not unfrequently turn the tables on her accusers—Lawyer Hindmarch like—and make them pay for having been robbed. No one knew better than Mrs. Margerum how many feathers could be extracted from a bed without detection, what reduction a horse-hair mattress would stand, or how to make two hams disappear under the process of frying one. Indeed she was quite an adept in housekeeping, always however

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preferring to live with single gentlemen, for whom she would save a world of trouble by hiring all the servants, thus of course having them well under her thumb.

Sir Moses having suffered severely from waste, drunkenness and incapacity, had taken Mrs. Margerum on that worst of all recommendations, the recommendation of another servant—viz., Lord Oilcake's cook, for whom Mrs. Margerum had done the outdoor carrying when in another situation. Mrs. Margerum's long career, coupled with her now having a son equal to the outdoor department, established a claim that was not to be resisted when his lordship's cook had a chance, on the application of Sir Moses, of placing her.

Mrs. Margerum entered upon her duties at Pangburn Park with the greatest plausibility, for not content with the usual finding fault with all the acts of her predecessors, she absolutely "reformed the butcher's bills," reducing them nearly a pound a week below what they had previously been, and showed great assiduity in sending in all the little odds and ends of good things that went out. To be sure the hams disappeared rather quickly, but then they *do* cut so to waste in frying, and the cows went off in their milk, but cows are capricious things, and Mrs. Hindmarch and she had a running account in the butter and egg line, Mrs. Hindmarch accommodating her with a few pounds of butter and a few score of eggs when Sir Moses had company, Mrs. Margerum repaying her at her utmost convenience, receiving the difference in cash, the repayment being always greatly in excess of the advance. Still as Mrs. Margerum permitted no waste, and allowed no one to rob but herself, the house appeared to be economically kept, and if Sir Moses didn't think that she was a "charming woman," he at all events considered he was a most fortunate man, and felt greatly indebted to Lord Oilcake's cook for recommending her—"dom'd if he didn't."

But though Mrs. Margerum kept the servants well up to their tea and sugar allowances, she granted them every indulgence in the way of gadding about, and also in having their followers, provided the followers didn't eat, by which means she kept the house quiet, and made her reign happy and prosperous.

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Being in full power when Mr. Bankhead came, she received him with the greatest cordiality, and her polite offer of having his clothes washed in Sir Moses' laundry being accepted, of course she had nothing to fear from Mr. Bankhead. And so they became as they ought to be, very good friends—greatly to Sir Moses' advantage.

Now for the out-door department of Sir Moses' ménage. The hunting establishment was of the rough-and-ready order, but still the hounds showed uncommon sport, and if the horses were not quite up to the mark, that perhaps was all in favour of the hounds. The horses indeed were of a very miscellaneous order—all sorts, all sizes, all better in their wind than on their legs—which were desperately scored and iron-marked. Still the cripples could go when they were warm, and being ridden by men whose necks were at a discount, they did as well as the best. There is nothing like a cheap horse for work.

Sir Moses' huntsman was the noted Tom Findlater, a man famous for everything in his line except sobriety, in which little item he was sadly deficient. Tom would have been quite at the top of the tree if it hadn't been for this unfortunate infirmity. "The crittur," as a Scotch huntsman told Sir Moses at Tattersall's, "could no keep itself sober." To show the necessities to which this degrading propensity reduces a man, we will quote Tom's description of himself when he applied to be discharged under the Insolvent Debtors Act before coming to Sir Moses. Thus it ran—"John Thomas Findlater, known also as Tom Findlater, formerly huntsman to His Grace the Duke of Streamaway, of Streamaway Castle, in Streamaway-shire, then of No. 6, Back Row, Broomfield, in the County of Tansey, helper in a livery stable, then huntsman to Sampson Cobbyford, Esq., of Bluntfield Park, master of the Hugger Mugger hounds in the County of Scramblington, then huntsman to Sir Giles Gatherthrong, Baronet, of Clipperley Park, in the County of Scurry, then huntsman to the Right Honourable Lord Lovedale, of Gayhurst Court, in the County of Tipperley, then of No. 11, Tan Yard Lane, Barrenbin, in the County of Thistleford, assistant to a ratcatcher,

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then huntsman to Captain Rattlinghope, of Killbriton Castle, in the County Steepleford, then whipper-in to the Towrowdeshire hounds in Derrydownshire, then helper at the Lion and the Lamb public-house at Screwford, in the County of Mucklethrift, then of 6½ Union Street, in Screwford, aforesaid, moulder to a clay-pipe maker, then and now out of business and employ, and whose wife is a charwoman."

Such were the varied occupations of a man, who might have lived like a gentleman, if he had only had conduct. There is no finer place than that of a huntsman, for as Beckford truly says, his office is pleasing and at the same time flattering, he is paid for that which diverts him, nor is a general after a victory more proud, than is a huntsman who returns with his fox's head.

When Sir Moses fell in with Tom Findlater down Tattersall's entry, Tom was fresh from being whitewashed in the Insolvent Debtors' Court, and having only ninepence in the world, and what he stood up in, he was uncommonly good to deal with. Moreover, Sir Moses had the vanity to think that he could reclaim even the most vicious; and, provided they were cheap enough, he didn't care to try. So, having lectured Tom well on the importance of sobriety, pointing out to him the lamentable consequences of drunkenness—of which no one was more sensible than Tom—Sir Moses chucked him a shilling, and told him if he had a mind to find his way down to Pangburn Park, in Hit-im-and-Hold-im shire, he would employ him, and give him what he was worth: with which vague invitation Tom came in the summer of the season in which we now find him.

And now having sketched the ménage, let us introduce our friend Billy thereto. But first we must get him out of the dangerous premises in which he is at present located—a visit that has caused our handsome friend Mrs. Pringle no little uneasiness.

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CHAPTER XLVI.

FINE BILLY DEPARTS FROM YAMMERTON GRANGE



T was fortunate for Sir Moses Mainchance, and unfortunate for our friend Fine Billy, that the Baronet was a bachelor, or Sir Moses would have fared very differently at the hands of the ladies, who seldom see much harm in a man so long as he is single, and, of course, refrains from showing a decided preference for any young lady. It is the married men who monopolise all the vice and improprieties of life. The Major, too, having sold Billy a horse, and got paid for him, was not very urgent about his further society at present, nor indisposed for a little quiet, especially as Mrs. Yammerton represented that the napkins and table-linen generally were running rather short. Mamma, too, knowing that there would be nothing but men-parties at Pangburn Park, had no uneasiness on that score, indeed rather thought a little absence might be favourable in enabling Billy to modify his general attentions in favour of a single daughter, for as yet he had been extremely dutiful in obeying his Mamma's injunctions not to be more agreeable to one sister than to another. Indeed, our estimable young friend did not want to be caught, and had been a good deal alarmed at the contents of his Mamma's last letter.

One thing, however, was settled, namely, that Billy was to go to the Park, and how to get there was the next consideration; for, though the Baronet had offered to convey him in the first instance, he had modified the offer into the loan of the gig at the last, and there would be more trouble in sending a

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horse to fetch it, than there would be in starting fair in a hired horse and vehicle from Yammerton Grange. The ready-witted Major, however, soon put matters right.

"I'll te-te-tell you wot," said he, "you can do. You can have old Tommy P-p-plumberg, the registrar of b-b-births, deaths, and marriages, t-t-trap for a trifle—s-s-say, s-s-seven and sixpence—only you must give him the money as a p-p-present, you know, not as it were for the hire, or the Excise would be down upon him for the du-du-duty, and p-p-p'r'aps fine him into the b-b-bargain."

Well, that seemed all right and feasible enough, and most likely would have been all right if Monsieur had proposed it; but, coming from master, of course Monsieur felt bound to object.

"It wouldn't hold 'alf a quarter their things," he said; "besides, how de deuce were they to manage with de horse?"

The Major essayed to settle that, too. There would be no occasion for Mr. Pringle to take all his things with him, as he hoped he would return to them from Sir Moses' and have another turn with the haryers—try if they couldn't circumvent the old hare that had beat them the other day, and the thing would be for Mr. Pringle to ride his horse quietly over, Monsieur going in advance with the gig, and having all things ready against Mr. Pringle arrived; for the Major well knew that the Baronet's promises were not to be depended upon, and would require some little manœuvring to get carried out, especially in the stable department.

Still there was a difficulty—Monsieur couldn't drive. No, by his vord, he couldn't drive. He was *valet-de-chambre*, not cochman or grum, and could make nothing of horses. Might know his ear from his tail, but dat was all. Should be sure to opset, and p'r'aps damage his crown. (Jack wanted to go in a carriage and pair.) Well, the Major would accommodate that too. Tom Cowlick, the hind's lad at the farm, should act the part of charioteer, and drive Monsieur, bag, baggage and all. And so matters were ultimately settled, it never occurring to Billy to make the attempt on the Major's stud that the

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Baronet proposed, in the shape of borrowing a second horse, our friend doubtless thinking he carried persecution enough in his own nag. The knotty point of transit being settled, Billy relapsed into his usual easy languor among the girls, while Monsieur made a judicious draft of clothes to take with them, leaving him a very smart suit to appear in at church on Sunday, and afterwards ride through the country in. We will now suppose the dread hour of departure arrived.

It was just as Mrs. Pringle predicted! There were the red eyelids and laced kerchiefs, and all the paraphernalia of leave-taking, mingled with the hopes of Major and Mrs. Yammerton, that Billy would soon return (after the washing, of course); for, in the language of the turf, Billy was anybody's game, and one sister had just as good a right to red eyelids as another.

Having seen Billy through the ceremony of leave-taking, the Major then accompanied him to the stable, thinking to say a word for himself and his late horse ere they parted. After admiring Napoleon the Great's condition, as he stood turned round in the stall ready for mounting, the Major observed casually, "that he should not be surprised if Sir Moses found fault with that 'oss."

"Why?" asked Billy, who expected perfection for a hundred guineas.

"D-d-don't know," replied the Major, with a Jack Rogers' shrug of the shoulders. "D-d-don't know, 'cept that Sir Moses seldom says a good word for anybody's 'oss but his own."

The clothes being then swept over the horse's long tail into the manger, he stepped gaily out, followed by our friend and his host.

"I thought it b-b-better to send your servant on," observed the Major, confidentially, as he stood eyeing the gay deceiver of a horse; "for, between ourselves, the Baronet's stables are none of the best, and it will give you the opportunity of getting the pick of them."

"Yarse," replied Billy, who did not enter into the delicacies of condition.

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“That ho-ho-horse requires w-w-warmth,” stuttered the Major, “and Sir Moses’ stables are both d-d-damp and d-d-dirty;” saying which, he tendered his ungloved hand, and with repeated hopes that Billy would soon return, and wishes for good sport, not forgetting compliments to the Baronet, our hero and his host at length parted for the present.

And the Major breathed more freely as he saw the cock-horse capering round the turn into the Helmington road.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE BAD STABLE; OR, "IT'S ONLY FOR ONE NIGHT."



FROM Yammerton Grange to Pangburn Park is twelve miles as the crow flies, or sixteen by the road. The Major, who knows every nick and gap in the country, could ride it in ten or eleven; but this species of knowledge is not to be imparted to even the most intelligent head. Not but what the Major tried to put it into Billy's, and what with directions to keep the Helmington road till he came to the blacksmith's shop, then to turn up the crooked lane on the left, leaving Wanley windmill on the right, and Altringham spire on the left, avoiding the village of Rothley, then to turn short at Samerside Hill, keeping Missleton Plantations full before him, with repeated assurances that he couldn't miss his way, he so completely bewildered our friend, that he was lost before he had gone a couple of miles. Then came the provoking ignorance of country life—the counter-questions instead of answers—the stupid stare and tedious drawl, ending, perhaps, with "ars a stranger," or maybe the utter negation of a place within, perhaps, a few miles of where the parties live. Billy blundered and blundered; took the wrong turning up the crooked lane, kept Wanley windmill on the left instead of the right, and finally rode right into the village of Rothley, and then began asking his way. It being Sunday, he soon attracted plenty of starers, such an uncommon swell being rare in the country; and one told him one way; another, another; and then the two began squabbling as to which was the right

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one, enlisting of course the sympathies of the bystanders, so that Billy's progress was considerably impeded. Indeed, he sometimes seemed to recede instead of advance, so contradictory were the statements as to distance, and the further he went the further he seemed to have to go.

If Sir Moses hadn't been pretty notorious as well from hunting the country as from his other performances, we doubt whether Billy would have reached Pangburn Park that night. As it was, Sir Moses' unpopularity helped Billy along in a growling uncivil sort of way, so different to the usual friendly forwarding that marks the approach to a gentleman's house in the country.

"Ay, ay, that's the way," said one, with a sneer. "What, you're gannin to him—are ye?" asked another, in a tone that as good as said "I wouldn't visit such a chap." "Aye, that's the way—straight on, through Addingham town"—for every countryman likes to have his village called a town—"straight on through Addingham town, keep the lane on the left, and then when ye come to the beer-shop at three road ends, ax for the Kingswood Road, and that'll lead ye to the lodges."

All roads are long when one has to ask the way—the distance seems nearly double in going to a place to what it does in returning, and Billy thought he never would get to Pangburn Park. The shades of night, too, drew on—Napoleon the Great had long lost his freedom and gaiety of action, and hung on the bit in a heavy, listless sort of way. Billy wished for a policeman to protect and direct him. Lights began to be scattered about the country, and day quickly declined in favour of night. The darkening mist gathered perceptibly. Billy longed for those lodges of which he had heard so much, but which seemed ever to elude him. He even appeared inclined to compound for the magnificence of two by turning in at Mr. Pinkerton's single one. By the direction of the woman at this one, he at length reached the glad haven, and passing through the open portals was at length in Pangburn Park. The drab-coloured road directed him onward, and Billy being relieved from the anxieties of asking his way,



"AYE, THAT'S THE WAY--STRAIGHT ON."

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pulled up into a walk, as well to cool his horse as to try and make out what sort of place he had got to. With the exception, however, of the road, it was a confused mass of darkness, that might contain trees, hills, houses, hay-stacks, anything. Presently the melodious cry of hounds came wafted on the southerly breeze, causing our friend to shudder at the temerity of his undertaking. "Drat these hounds," muttered he, wishing he was well out of the infliction, and as he proceeded onward the road suddenly divided, and both ways inclining towards certain lights, Billy gave his horse his choice, and was presently clattering on the pavement of the court-yard of Pangburn Park.

Sir Moses' hospitality was rather of a spurious order; he would float his friends with claret and champagne, and yet grudge their horses a feed of corn. Not but that he was always extremely liberal and pressing in his offers, begging people would bring whatever they liked, and stay as long as they could, but as soon as his offers were closed with he began to back out. Oh, he forgot! he feared he could only take in one horse; or if he could take in a horse he feared he couldn't take in the groom. Just as he offered to lend Billy his gig and horse and then reduced the offer into the loan of the gig only. So it was with the promised two-stalled stable. When Monsieur drove, or rather was driven, with folded arms into the court-yard, and asked for his "me lor's stable," the half-muzzy groom observed with a lurch and a hitch of his shorts, that "they didn't take in (hiccup) 'osses there—leastways to stop all night."

"Vell, but you'll put up me lor Pringle's," observed Jack with an air of authority, for he considered that he and his master were the exceptions to all general rules.

"Fear we can't (hiccup) it," replied the blear-eyed caitiff; "got an many (hiccup) 'osses comin' to-night as ever we have room for. Shall have to (hiccup) two in a (hiccup) as it is (hiccup)."

"Oh, you can stow him away somewhere," now observed Mr. Demetrius Bankhead, emerging from his pantry dressed

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in a pea-green wide-awake, a Meg Merrilies tartan shooting-jacket, a straw-coloured vest, and drab pantaloons.

"You'll be Mr. Pringle's gentleman, I presume," observed Bankhead, now turning and bowing to Jack, who still retained his seat in the gig.

"I be, sare," replied Jack, accepting the proffered hand of his friend.

"Oh, yes, you'll put him up somewhere, Fred," observed Bankhead, appealing again to the groom, "he'll take no harm anywhere," looking at the hairy, heated animal, "put 'im in the empty cow-house," adding "it's only for one night—only for one night."

"O dis is not the quadruped," observed Monsieur, nodding at the cart mare before him, "dis is a job beggar vot ve can kick out at our pleasure, but me lor is a-comin' on his own proper cheval, and he vill vant space and conciliation."

"Oh, we'll manage him somehow," observed Bankhead confidently, "only we've a large party to-night, and want all the spare stalls we can raise, but they'll put 'im up somewhere," added he, "they'll put 'im up somewhere," observing as before, "it's only for one night—only for one night. Now won't you alight and walk in?" continued he, motioning Monsieur to descend, and Jack having intimated that his lor would compliment their politeness if they took vell care of his 'orse, conceived he had done all that a faithful domestic could under the circumstances, and leaving the issue in the hands of fate, alighted from the vehicle, and entering by the back way, proceeded to exchange family "particulars" with Mr. Bankhead in the pantry.

Now the Pangburn Park stables were originally very good, forming a crescent at the back of the house, with coach-houses and servants' rooms intervening, but owing to the trifling circumstance of allowing the drains to get choked, they had fallen into disrepute. At the back of the crescent were some auxiliary stables, worse of course than the principal range, into which they put night-visitors' horses, and those whose owners were rash enough to insist upon Sir Moses fulfilling

ASK MAMMA.

his offers of hospitality to them. At either end of these latter were loose boxes, capable of being made into two-stalled stables, only the partitions were always disappearing, and the roofs had long declined turning the weather; but still they were better than nothing, and often formed receptacles for sly cabby's, or postboys who preferred the chance of eleemosynary fare at Sir Moses' to the hand in the pocket hospitality of the Red Lion, at Fillerton Hill, or the Main-chance Arms, at Duckworth Bridge. Into the best of these bad boxes the gig mare was put, and as there was nothing to get in the house, Tom Cowlick took his departure as soon as she had eaten her surreptitious feed of oats. The pampered Napoleon the Great, the horse that required all the warmth and coddling in the world, was next introduced, Fine Billy alighting from his back in the yard with all the unconcern that he would from one of Mr. Splint's or Mr. Spavins's week day or hour jobs. Indeed, one of the distinguishing features between the new generation of sportsmen and the old, is the marked indifference of the former to the comforts of their horses compared to that shown by the old school, who always looked to their horses before themselves, and not unfrequently selected their inns with reference to the stables. Now-a-days, if a youth gives himself any concern about the matter, it will often only be with reference to the bill, and he will frequently ride away without ever having been into the stable. If, however, Fine Billy had seen this, he would most likely have been satisfied with the comfortable assurance that it was "only for one night," the old saying, "enough to kill a horse," leading the uninitiated to suppose that they are very difficult to kill.

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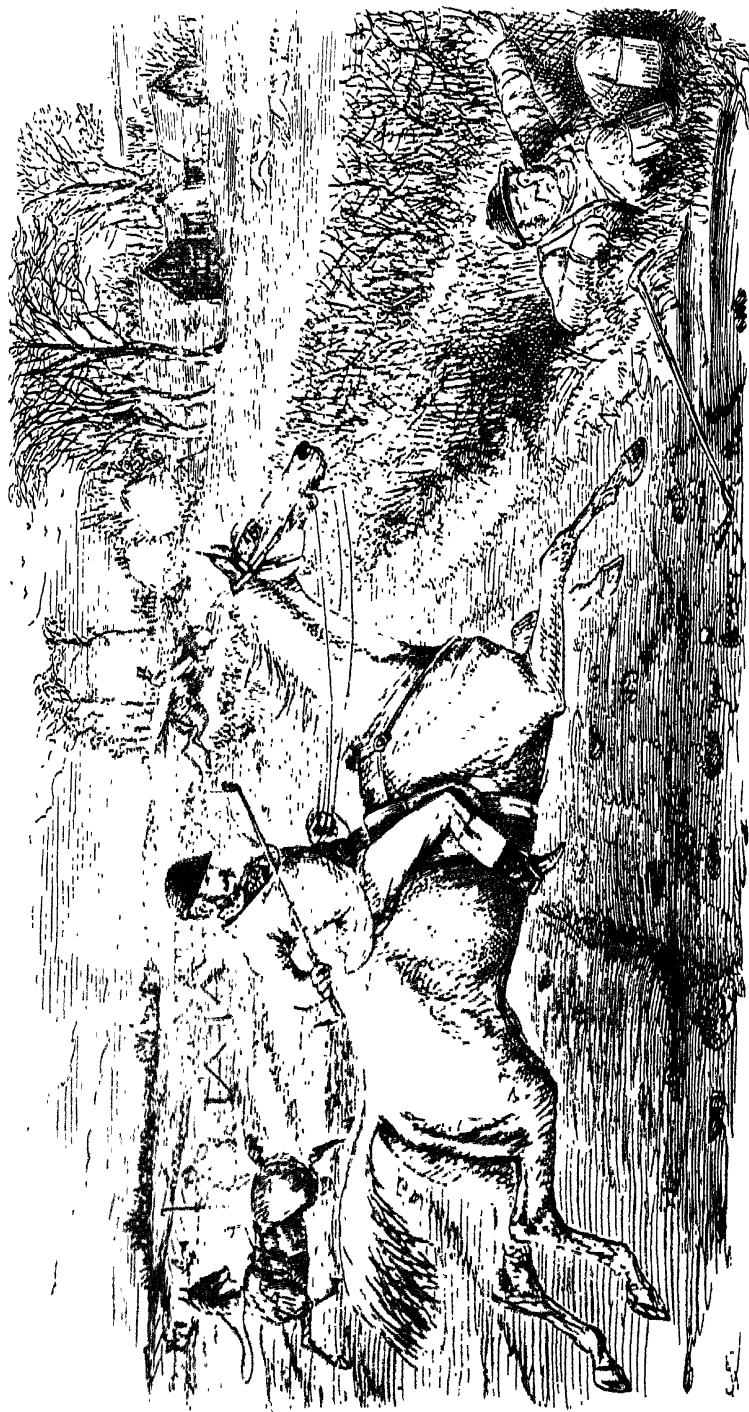
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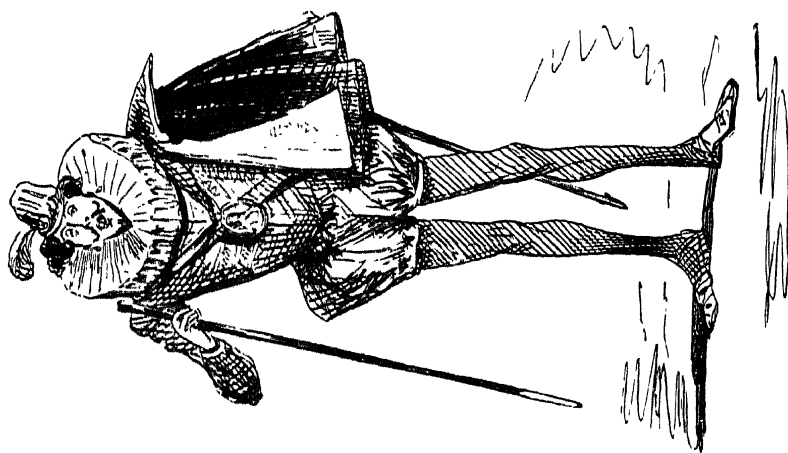


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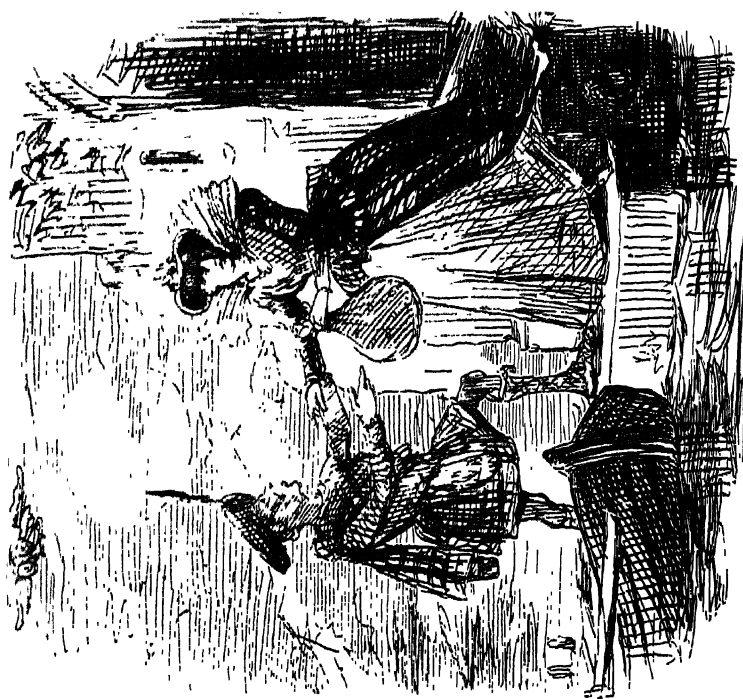
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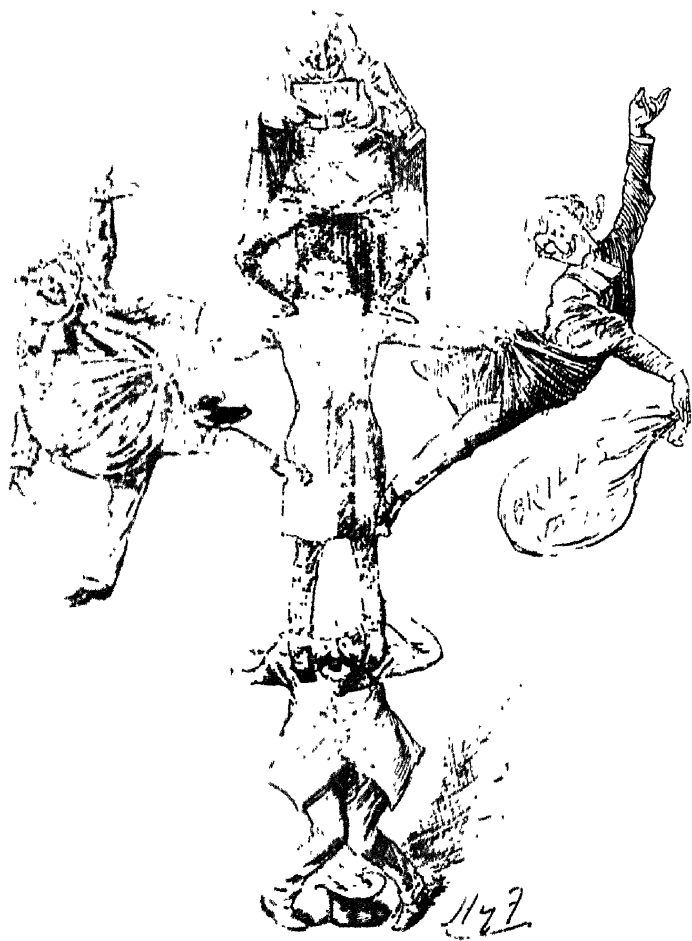
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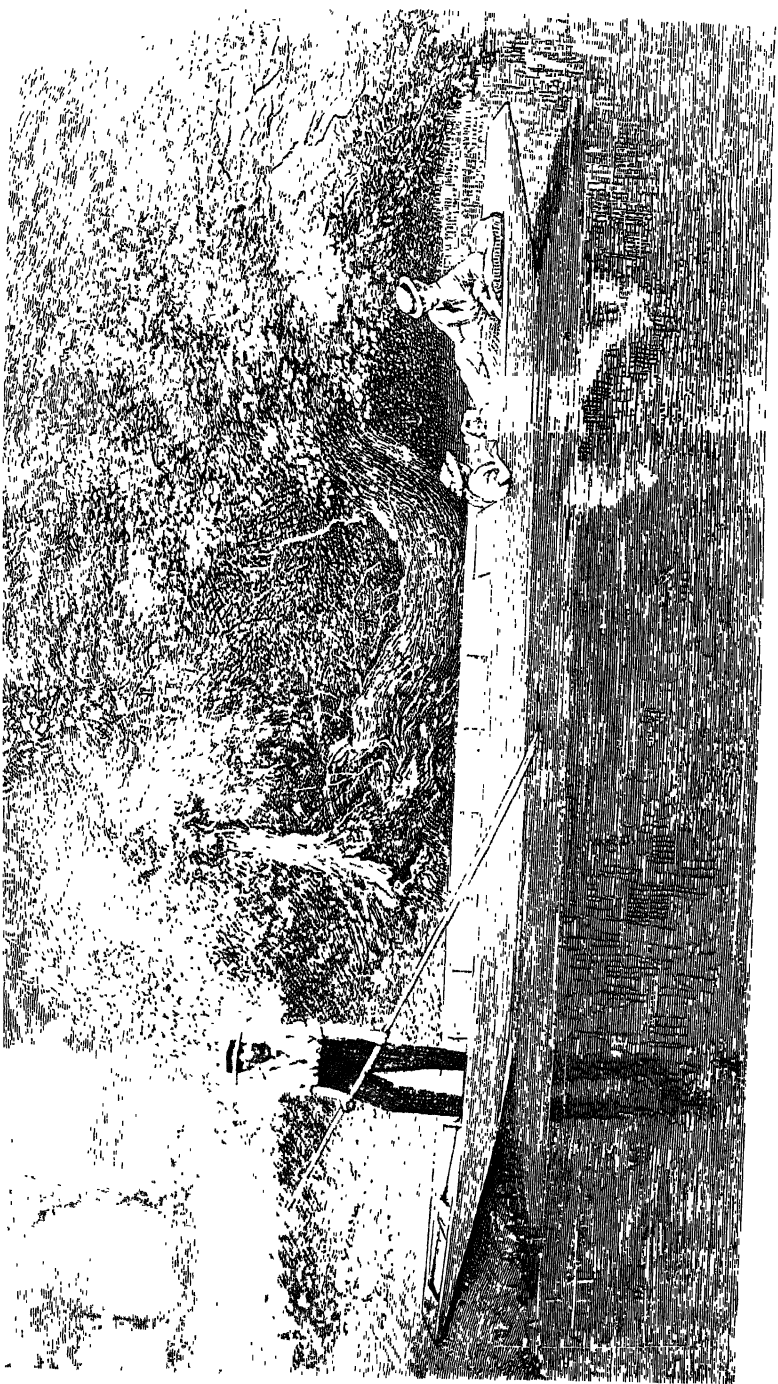
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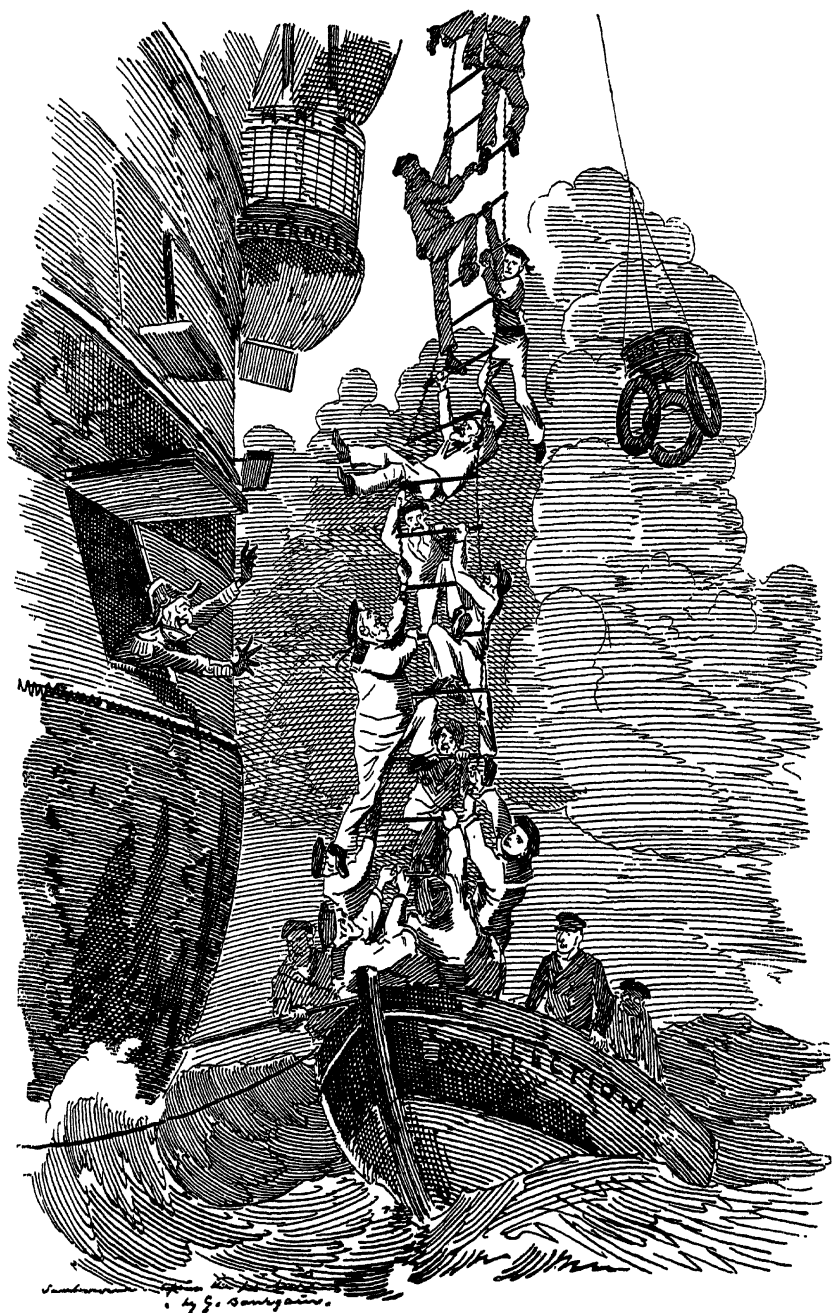
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Then take thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh ;

But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed

One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods

Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate

Unto the state of Venice.

Gra. O upright judge !—Mark, Jew !—O learned judge !

Shy. Is that the law ?

Por. Thyself shall see the act :

For, as thou urgest justice, be assured

Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

Gra. O learned judge !—Mark, Jew ;—a learned judge !

Shy. I take this offer then,—pay the bond thrice,

And let the Christian go.

Bass.

Here is the money.

Por. Soft.

The Jew shall have all justice ;—soft ;—no haste ;—

He shall have nothing but the penalty.

Gra. O Jew ! an upright judge, a learned judge !

Por. Therefore, prepare thee to cut off the flesh.

Shed thou no blood ; nor cut thou less, nor more,

But just a pound of flesh : if thou tak'st more,

Or less, than a just pound,—be it but so much

As makes it light, or heavy, in the substance,

Or the division of the twentieth part

Of one poor scruple,—nay, if the scale do turn

But in the estimation of a hair,—

Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.

Gra. A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew !

Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.

Por. Why doth the Jew pause ? take thy forfeit.

Shy. Give me my principal, and let me go.

Bass. I have it ready for thee ; here it is.

Por. He hath refused it in the open court ;

He shall have merely justice, and his bond.

Gra. A Daniel, still say I ; a second Daniel !—

I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

Shy. Shall I not have barely my principal ?

Por. Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeit.

To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

Shy. Why, then the devil give him good of it !

I'll stay no longer question.

Por. Tarry, Jew ;

The law hath yet another hold on you.

It is enacted in the laws of Venice,—

If it be proved against an alien,

That by direct or indirect attempts

He seek the life of any citizen,

The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive

Shall seize one half his goods ; the other half

Comes to the privy coffer of the state ;

And the offender's life lies in the mercy

Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.

In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st ;

For it appears by manifest proceeding,

That, indirectly, and directly too,

Thou hast contrived against the very life

Of the defendant ; and thou hast incur'd

The danger formerly by me rehearsed.

Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the duke.

Gra. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself ;

And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,

Thou hast not left the value of a cord ;

G

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GLOSSARY.

Excrements—bedded hair, like life in excrements.

The word *excrement* was a general term for anything growing out of the body, as the hair or nails.

Eyases, nestlings. An *eyas* is a young unfledged hawk, just taken from the nest.

Fantasy, imagination, fancy.

Fardels, cumbersome or inconvenient burdens,

Fay, faith. Possibly from the French *foi*.

For and a shrouding sheet, and also a shrouding sheet.

Fordoes, undoes, destroys, ruins.

Friending, friendliness, friendship, favour.

Fust, to become mouldy or fusty, to smell ill.

Gentry, courtesy, good breeding, politeness.

Gib, a tom-cat.

Gules, red. A term in heraldry.

Handsaw—know a hawk from a handsaw. The word "handsaw" is a corruption of *heronshaw*, a provincial term for a heron.

Hebenon, possibly intended for *henbane*.

Hent—know thou a more horrid hent, i.e. be reserved for a more dreadful occasion.

Hic et ubique, here and everywhere.

Hoodman-blind, the game of blind-man's buff.

Hugger-mugger, clandestinely, by stealth.

Impitious, unchecked, without pity, merciless.

Imponed, laid down as a wager.

In few, in a few words, in brief.

John-a-dreams, a sleepy, muddle-headed fellow.

Jump, just, exactly, in the nick of time. A familiar term with this signification in Shakspeare's days.

Keep—where they keep, i.e. what places they frequent.

Kibe, a chilblain.

Lets, hinders, prevents, impedes.

Liberal shepherds, free-spoken, licentious shepherds. An obsolete meaning of the word *liberal*.

GLOSSARY.

Limed soul, i.e. caught as with bird-lime.

List, a boundary or limit.

Loggats, an old game, which consisted in fixing a stake in the ground and pitching small pieces of wood at it.

Long live the King! The watchword of the night.

Mazzard, the head, the skull.

Merely—possess it merely, i.e. absolutely.

Miching mallecho. Skulking mischief.

Milch, moist, shedding tears.

Mobled, muffled or wrapped up, veiled.

Moist star, the moon.

Mutines, mutineers.

Napkin—take my napkin, i.e. my handkerchief.

Native to, connected by nature with.

Obsequious, serious, as at funeral obsequies.

Occurrences, occurrences, current incidents or events.

Paddock, a toad. A diminutive of the Anglo-Saxon *pad*, a toad.

Painted word, i.e. disguised word.

Paiocke, a peacock.

Parle, a parley, a conference with an opponent.

Perdy, an exclamation. A contraction from the French *par Dieu!*

Polacks, Poles, natives of Poland.

Porpentine, porcupine. An obsolete form of the word.

Provincial roses on my razed shoes, i.e. rosettes in the shape of Provence or damask roses, on shoes, which according to the fashion of the period were slashed or streaked in patterns.

Quiddits, quiddities, subtleties in law or in common talk.

Quillets, nice points or quibbles.

Quoted, observed, noted, scanned.

Rack, a mass of clouds.

Recorders. A recorder was a kind of flageolet.

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